

Report to: Strategic Planning Committee



Date of Meeting 5 May 2026

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Heritage Strategy 2024-2042

Report summary:

Following the successful completion of the Heritage Strategy Consultation (28 November 2025 – 26 January 2026), feedback received from organisations and individual respondents has been analysed, and updates to the strategy text have been implemented. The full list of amendments to the strategy and our response to feedback can be viewed in appendix A and the tracked changes version of the strategy in Appendix B. The feedback we received has resulted in a number of positive amendments to the strategy, such as the correction of minor factual or grammatical errors to updated case studies, economic and historic environment statistics, and further information on the historic environment, organisations, legislation and guidance.

The strategy brings together information on the heritage of East Devon and identifies the issues, challenges and opportunities for the future with a plan of recommended actions. It informs and supports the heritage policies of the new Local Plan.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Strategic Planning Committee:

1. The Strategic Planning Committee agree to adopt the updated Second Heritage Strategy (2024-2042) in support of the council's duty towards the historic environment.
2. Note that the Heritage Strategy supports the Local Plan as evidence for policies.
3. Note that the Strategy should be taken into account as a guide for our Cultural, Tourism and Planning functions, amongst others.

Reason for recommendation:

The NPPF (para.203) states that "Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats." The Local Plan outlines its policies for the district's heritage, whilst the Heritage Strategy sets out more detailed aims, objectives and a plan of recommended actions. With the strategy having been updated following the consultation that ran alongside the second reg. 19 consultation for the Local Plan, the strategy is ready for adoption to support the policies within the plan and the council's commitment to supporting the historic environment.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; Low

Links to background information Links to background documents are contained in the body of this report.

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- A supported and engaged community
- Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- Resilient economy that supports local business
- Financially secure and improving quality of services

Report in full

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report introduces the updated Heritage Strategy (2024-2042) for East Devon, and recommends that, having completed an 8-week public consultation between November 2025 and January 2026, the amendments set out in this report are approved and that the finalised Second Heritage Strategy is adopted.
- 1.2 The strategy, in full, that is recommended for adoption is appended to this committee report, alongside the full list of amendments and our response to feedback (appendix A).

2 What is Heritage and why is a strategy necessary?

- 2.1 The term heritage embraces history in all its forms, from buildings, spaces, art and artefacts to natural heritage such as landscape, flora and fauna and cultural heritage including place names, customs and traditions.

The Historic Environment is defined in the NPPF (2024) as “all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora”

A Heritage Asset is defined in the NPPF (2024) as “a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”

- 2.2 The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) p.203 requires local plans to set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. Historic England emphasised this requirement in its response to consultations on the Issues and Options and Draft versions of the emerging Local Plan. East Devon has a rich historic environment and an abundance of heritage assets that provide very significant environmental, social and economic benefits for the district. As an irreplaceable resource the strategy will help to ensure that they are protected, maintained and enhanced to the advantage of future generations.
- 2.3 The existing [Heritage Strategy](#) covers the period 2013-2031 and, as more than 5 years have passed since its adoption and many of the short term actions have been achieved, it is considered an appropriate time to refresh and update it so that it can support the policies in the new Local Plan.
- 2.4 The new strategy follows the same format as the original and presents a summary of the historic environment of the district, its significance and its benefits. It also identifies the heritage issues in East Devon and develops objectives for the future with an action plan for the delivery of our recommendations. In more detail:

Section 1:

Following an introduction, this sets out the purpose of the strategy, provides information on the role of the Council and other organisations, sources of information and a background of legislation and policy. It also discusses the implementation of the actions in the original strategy and highlights the very significant progress made on these.

Section 2:

The overall strategy for the future of our heritage is met through a range of aims and objectives. These are addressed in the three themes of:

A: Understanding and appreciating our historic environment

This section provides an overview of the historic environment, detailing significant designated heritage assets such as Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments, and the World Heritage Site coastline and landscape. It also briefly covers undesignated assets, including archaeological findings.

B: Positively managing our historic environment

This theme sets out our current policies and programmes relating to development management, Conservation Areas and heritage assets at risk. It identifies issues and looks at the future programme of managing these designated assets and the potential for a local list of undesignated assets, whilst providing further guidance on local distinctiveness. A significant new section relates to carbon reduction and climate

change mitigation and how this can be achieved, particularly in listed buildings, without damaging their intrinsic character.

C: Enhancing and benefitting from our heritage

This theme looks at the value of our heritage as a part of sustainable development, and the social, economic and environmental benefits it provides for East Devon . It identifies how we can work better with partners and communities to enhance our heritage and make the most of these benefits, particularly in terms of working with Neighbourhood Planning groups and informing their policy production . It also considers the wider policy context.

Section 3:

Implementation of the strategy is considered including resources, benefits and monitoring. The objectives raised from each theme are developed into a plan of recommended actions, detailed initially for the next three years. Many of these actions follow on from the original strategy, and are maintenance tasks or updating of information.

Section 4:

Appendices include a summary description of the Conservation Areas of East Devon, information and maps for each of our historic town centres, details of partners and local history organisations. This has been updated to reflect the new Local Plan policies and latest guidance.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 The actions recommended in the strategy have been carefully considered in the light of resource implications. They are either a priority as they are needed to fulfil a statutory duty, or are expected to produce significant beneficial outcomes whilst minimising resources in the long term.
- 3.2 A significant number of short-term priorities identified in the original strategy have been wholly or partially achieved and many of the actions in this updated strategy involve further or ongoing work to build on these achievements whilst minimising the resources required.
- 3.3 For example, a more comprehensive website is required to provide a base for the exchange of information and links to other organisations, guides and training in heritage issues. The heritage webpages established under the previous strategy will now be maintained and updated rather than created anew, recognising that most Officer input has already been undertaken.
- 3.4 The original strategy required a considerable investment of staff time facilitating and advising on training. However, this has built capacity within local communities, utilising their enthusiasm and expertise to manage their own assets and take accountability of their area through neighbourhood plans. Further training is likely to be delivered via support for Neighbourhood Planning.

- 3.5 Support will be provided to Neighbourhood Planning groups who wish to protect heritage assets through designation and/or producing policies and continue to encourage resourceful ways for communities to help manage assets in their local areas. Along with specialist historic groups, volunteers will continue to be encouraged to identify non-designated heritage assets locally. A number of pilot schemes were implemented following the original strategy and these have informed the actions in the current strategy.
- 3.6 It should be noted that the devolution proposals are likely to have an impact on the availability of staff and other resources to implement the action plan. Details are not yet known, but this could offer the opportunity to work collaboratively with staff from other Devon authorities and could increase the scope of future projects. Recognising the uncertainties, and the potential need to review the strategy within a few years to ensure a consistent approach across authorities, the majority of short-term actions focus on existing processes and projects rather than committing to major new initiatives.

4 Public Consultation and Amendments

- 4.1 A public consultation to provide residents and organisations with a chance to voice their opinions and influence the final state of the strategy was conducted for 8 weeks between 28th November 2025 and the 26th January 2026. The consultation length was in conformity with the Statement of Community Involvement [SCI January 2021](#) that states consultation should be a minimum of 4 weeks, with additional time provided to account for the Christmas holiday.
- 4.2 13 responses were received from individual members of the public and organisations such as Historic England, the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team, Devon Wildlife Trust and Devon Archaeological Society. Full PDF representations can be found on the [Heritage Strategy Consultation website](#), with a list of the changes made to the strategy and officer response to any additional feedback available in Appendix A.
- 4.3 The feedback we received has resulted in a number of positive amendments to the strategy. Key changes to note include the correction of minor factual or grammatical errors, updated case studies such as ‘Discovering Dunkeswell Abbey’, updated economic and historic environment statistics, further information on the tangible and intangible cultural and heritage assets and organisations within East Devon, and additional details on recent national and local legislation and guidance. Amendments to the aims, objectives and actions for the strategy - including the addition of three new actions focused on biodiversity, ecology and the local list of heritage assets - have been included in the theme summaries and action plan where appropriate, with little impact on the overall predicted resource implications of the strategy.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 The new Local Plan contains a number of heritage policies and proposed allocations with heritage implications. To comply with the NPPF and address the matters raised by Historic England and other representors during consultation on the Draft Plan, it is proposed that the existing Heritage Strategy be updated to cover the remainder of the new Plan period. The Strategy will form the basis of the evidence to support the heritage policies in the Local Plan and, through the action plan, demonstrate the Councils commitment to protecting and enhancing the historic environment.

5.2 It is recommended that the Heritage Strategy (2024-2042), with amendments made following the public consultation, is approved and adopted, to enhance the historic environment and support the Local Plan heritage policies.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications identified within the report. (AB-21/04/2026)

Legal implications:

There are no direct legal implications identified within the report. (DH/002533-23/04/2026)