

Historic Environment Division

Guidance on Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Historic Environment

June 2018



Historic Environment Division's Aim

“Helping communities to enjoy and realise the value of our historic environment”

We do this by:

- Recording, protecting, conserving, advising, promoting and enhancing its value
- Utilising and growing our specialist knowledge and expertise in collaboration with a wide range of groups and individuals
- Contributing to the Executive's objectives as laid out in the Programme for Government

Our historic environment provides authentic and attractive places which increase our pride, character and identity, lead to improved wellbeing and community engagement, and to prosperity through tourism, investment, skills, regeneration and creativity. It is a precious and finite resource available to present generations, and with appropriate management, to future generations.

This guidance document provides information toward supporting those who are involved in assessing the effects of plans on Northern Ireland's historic environment, a valuable and finite resource, which comprises archaeological and architectural heritage representative of human interaction with the natural environment. Robust assessment of potential environmental impacts on this resource is vital to ensure that it is managed sustainably. The document offers advice on historic environment considerations during the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment process, including examples of the baseline evidence which should be considered through the different stages of screening,

scoping, assessment, and reporting. It also provides guidance on the implementation of historic environment legislation, the relevant policy in the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS).

Reference should be made to any actual legislation referred to in this document and if any discrepancy or conflict exists between this guide and legislation, the provisions of the legislation will prevail.

Further information can be obtained from the Department for Communities website: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk>

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Cover Image:

Aerial view of the historic core of Armagh, demonstrating the influences the historic environment has exerted on the evolution of its streetscape and sense of place (HED).

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1. Introduction

The Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) sets out regional guidance to “Conserve, protect, and where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment”¹ It recognises that Northern Ireland has a rich and diverse historic environment that contributes to identity, sense of place and history. This unique and varied historic landscape is a key marketing, tourism, and recreational asset, which if protected and managed sustainably, can make a valuable contribution to our society, environment and economy. The historic environment embraces many sites of local and international importance which once lost cannot be fully replaced.

In Northern Ireland the identification, recording and conservation of archaeological sites, monuments and landscapes, and listed buildings, collectively referred to as heritage assets, is primarily the responsibility of Historic Environment Division, based within the Department for Communities. Just as there is continuity between past and present, so also there is between present and future.

We have a duty to care for what we ourselves have inherited, not simply for our own benefit, but also to enhance awareness and understanding of it, with the view to passing it on as a living legacy to those who come after us. Landscapes are dynamic and changing, and in order to be sustainable, the change can be managed so that the historic environment is maintained or enhanced. Careful and sensitive realisation of the historic environment resource to achieve social, environmental and economic benefits can result in high quality sustainable solutions to the regeneration of urban and rural areas. We can add to and conserve our historic legacy by creating examples of high quality architecture, townscape and landscape design which can represent our own era in the centuries to come.

For those involved in the production of Local Development Plans this guidance should be considered alongside Development Plan Practice Note 4 - Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment.

¹ RDS 2035, RG11, p47.

2. Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC) is a European Union (EU) requirement that aims to ascertain that environmental considerations form part of the preparation of certain plans and programmes. In Northern Ireland this is implemented via the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (NI) 2004 (EAPP). Cultural heritage, including archaeological and architectural heritage, is one of the themes it identifies to be considered when undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of every Local Development Plan (LDP) is required under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. Section 25 of the NI (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 places a duty on councils and government departments to contribute to sustainable development. Sustainability Appraisal should be a comprehensive assessment of the likely effects of an emerging plan by examining the potential impacts on social, economic and environmental outcomes. It also takes in the requirements of the SEA Directive and therefore requires assessment of the likely outcomes on the historic environment.

The stages of SA/SEA are defined as

- **SCREENING (SEA ONLY)**
 - To determine whether a plan or programme requires SEA
- **SCOPING** -To decide on the scope and level of detail and to develop assessment framework
- **DEVELOPING PLAN OPTIONS, REFINING ALTERNATIVES, ASSESSING LIKELY EFFECTS**
 - To test plan objectives against SA/SEA framework
 - Development of reasonable alternatives
 - Examination of likely effects
 - Mitigation and monitoring
- **UNDERTAKING THE ASSESSMENT**
- **PUBLICATION, CONSULTATION AND ADOPTION**
- **MONITORING**

Those involved in LDP production should also refer to the table, Fig.1 in Development Plan Practice Note 4

The modern landscape of Northern Ireland is an historic landscape which is almost entirely marked by some 10,000 years of human activity. Much of its value lies in its complexity, regional diversity and local distinctiveness. We all live in this legacy landscape and even the most modern developments that lie within it often reflect or incorporate aspects such as historic boundaries and routeways.

Heritage assets such as ancient sites and monuments, listed and historic buildings, parks and gardens and industrial heritage are hugely important sources of information about our past and are often significant, valued and emotive features in townscape and countryside.

Comprehensive assessments are important to inform understanding and proper evaluation of the historic environment.

2.1 General Principles

The principles below are valuable when analysing the historic environment in the context of SA/SEA

- Engaging the knowledge and skills of historic environment specialists in developing the SA/SEA
- Defining the historic environment broadly, to cover a wide range of heritage assets and their settings, and the historic character of landscapes, townscapes and seascapes
- Recognition of the irreplaceable nature of heritage assets and the implications of this (i.e. that authentic historic places are a finite resource which if destroyed or damaged, cannot be replaced)
- Appreciating the many sustainability benefits of the historic environment, including environmental, economic, cultural and social benefits
- Identifying, understanding and appropriately conveying the significance of the asset and its setting and also identifying and assessing the degree of effect of the plan or programme (i.e. significant effects) There should be adequate consideration of the effects of the plan on heritage assets and on the wider landscape setting and context
- Ensuring that the SA/SEA analysis of the historic environment are suitably iterative and the findings of each stage used to inform the next stage, with this progression documented
- Ensuring that the SA/SEA analysis is appropriate to the type, level and purpose of plan under consideration
- Identifying the intertwined relationships between the historic environment and the natural environment, such as their influence on the present day character of the landscape, while clearly providing specific consideration of both types of environment as well

- Including consideration of any potential cross or trans-boundary effects on the historic environment relevant to the plan area, including cumulative and synergistic effects
- Avoiding, or minimising adverse effect on the historic environment, which is created by the plan
- Maximising the potential benefits of the historic environment through the plan.
- Identifying all appropriate mitigation, enhancement and monitoring for the historic environment, clearly for delivery at implementation stage
- Engaging local heritage groups and societies, and the wider community in the SA/SEA process, can bring benefits such as an improved understanding of the historic environment of a place and what is valued locally and why

3. Screening

The screening process determines whether or not SEA is required for a plan. Whether a plan requires an SEA will involve considering the existing character of an area, including the historic environment, and the likely environmental effects of the plan. SEA is required for certain categories of plans and programmes where they are determined to have significant environmental effects. In line with the EAPP Regulations (NI) 2004, the authority preparing the plan (the responsible authority) should forward its screening document to the consultation authority and their views must be taken into account before a determination is made as to the need for a SEA.

Historic Environment Division aims to respond within 21 days to screening consultations, advising whether the plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the historic environment, and highlighting any specific strategic issues relevant to heritage assets in the area of the plan or programme.

Determining specifically what are the 'likely significant effects' on the historic environment will need to be considered on its merits - depending on a variety of factors.

Consider the aims of the plan or programme, the nature of the local historic

environment and how the two will interact.

- Where a plan is allocating land for specific purposes or otherwise setting a framework for the allocation or development of land, and where heritage assets are in the vicinity or have potential to be present (example. previously unrecorded buried remains, which can sometimes be larger in scale than upstanding features) then some sort of impact is likely. Understanding what the impact is on the significance of the heritage asset, together with any potential mitigation of that impact will assist in coming to a conclusion as to whether it is 'likely' to have a 'significant effect' on the historic environment.

To inform Historic Environment Division's response to a screening consultation, it is beneficial if the consultation documentation includes:

- An outline of the document which is to be screened
- A map of the area
- A screening statement using the criteria in Schedule 1 of the EAPP Regulations (NI) 2004 to clearly justify the responsible authority's screening decision

² Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs. Historic Environment Division provide input to DAERA in relation to SEA for historic environment matters through a Service Level Agreement

- Information on cultural heritage and heritage assets in and adjacent to the area that the plan or programme relates to
- A brief synopsis of the positive and negative impacts of the plan or programme

Consideration of the historic environment at the screening stage should also outline potential for likely significant effects on heritage assets that do not have a statutory designation. It is important that consideration is also afforded to the potential for previously unrecognised heritage assets or previously unrecorded below ground archaeological remains. Information derived from the National Monuments and Buildings Record for Northern Ireland may help inform the process, but having the baseline evidence analysed by a qualified/professionally accredited heritage professional will make the assessment more robust.

Where it is determined by the responsible authority that significant environmental effects are unlikely and SEA is not required, the responsible authority must prepare a statement setting out why it has reached this decision and send this to the consultation body (DAERA SEA team).² Once agreed with the consultation body a copy of this should be sent to Historic Environment Division within 28 days.

World Heritage Sites are designated by United Nations Educational Scientific and

Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for their ‘outstanding universal value’ (OUV). Each UK World Heritage Site has a management plan which contains both long term and day to day actions to protect, conserve and present the Site. One of the objectives of these plans is to specify how the OUV of the site will be maintained. Northern Ireland has presently one World Heritage Site, the Giant’s Causeway, which is designated specifically because of its unique natural heritage value but which has historic landscape character and important cultural and traditional associations. At present the region also has one UNESCO Global Geopark, Marble Arch, straddling the border region between Fermanagh and Cavan.

In certain circumstances, it is possible that an emerging management plan may set out policies to protect the OUV, which will be similar to development management policies more usually found in local plan documents. Where this is the case, the responsible authority will consult the relevant statutory body as to the likely effects of the plan before deciding whether SEA is required.

Supplementary planning documents

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are unlikely to require SEA as they should expand on development plan policies that have already been subject to a full SA via the Local Development Plan process. Conversely, if a SPD is considered likely to have significant environmental effects which have not previously been assessed, then SEA may be required.

4. Scoping

Scoping aims to set the context against which the likely effects of the plan in question can be measured. To do this, it is necessary to identify the scope and level of detail of information to be included in the final SA or SEA report. This should be proportionate to the type, purpose and level of plan under consideration.

The intention is to identify the key characteristics of the area in question, other initiatives likely to be having local impacts and to develop a mechanism to be able to forecast the likely effects of the plan, together with information relating to the current situation in order to assess this. A scoping report will usually therefore:

- Identify other plans, policies and programmes and sustainability objectives - this will include various pieces of legislation or international conventions depending on the location in question
- Contain baseline evidence of heritage assets in the area to which the scoping relates, toward substantiating the current situation, and demonstrate an awareness of the need to assess this baseline evidence and the potential impact of the plan on it
- Identify sustainability issues, gaps and problems, including opportunities for and threats to the historic environment
- Identify indicators, objectives and targets

- Include information on the methodology for the appraisal to ascertain if effects on the historic environment will be properly addressed
- Consult the statutory consultation bodies on the scope of the report

4.1 Reviewing plans, policies and programmes

The review of related plans, programmes and policies will vary depending on the specific circumstances and the type of plan being assessed in order to be proportionate. Those with content or sections potentially relevant to the historic environment include:

International/European

- UNESCO World Heritage Convention
- UNESCO Convention on Underwater Heritage
- European Landscape Convention
- The Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe
- The Xian Declaration
- The European Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

- Rules annexed to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage

Regional

- The Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- Class Consents Order 2001
- The Protection of Wrecks Act 1973
- The Planning Act (NI) 2011
- Regional Development Strategy 2035
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)
- Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS 6) Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage
- Landscape Character Assessment of Northern Ireland (2000)
- Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment
- UK Marine Policy Statement (2011)

Local

- Local Development Plans
- Marine Plans

- Other adopted local plans/strategies example. heritage action plans, supplementary planning documents

- Conservation Management Plans
- Conservation Strategies
- AONB Management Plans
- Other Cultural Heritage / Tourism Strategies
- Conservation Area Character Appraisals

4.2 Baseline Evidence

Section 3 “Survey of District” of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires a council to keep under review the matters which may be expected to affect the development of its district or the planning of that development. These matters include principle physical, economic, social and environmental characteristics.

The formation and updating of a robust and comprehensive baseline will assist in demonstrating a proportionate evidence base for the plan in question, as well as help to strengthen its case for soundness when subject to examination. Baseline information that describes the current and future likely condition of the historic environment in terms of its significance, sensitivity and capacity to accommodate change can also assist in the identification of areas with particular sensitivity to development, sustainability issues, predict and monitor likely effects and in identifying alternative solutions. Publicly held records such as the National

Monuments and Buildings Record for Northern Ireland ³ will be particularly important toward assessing the historic environment, but other records such as historic mapping, and townland and parish boundaries should also be utilised.

Evidence gathering is a central part of local, marine and community plan preparation and formulation, and assembling information on the historic environment for an SA/SEA should not normally entail additional work. Where responsible authorities do not currently have a sound evidence base available relevant to future challenges and opportunities, they may need to consider augmenting this so that the SEA assists the smooth progress of the plan. In assessing the likely effects of the plan and analysing baseline information, there may also be a need to look at this in relation to a wider geographic area and across administrative boundaries. For example this might be in relation to traffic generation or setting issues, or the situation of designated areas.

Where there are gaps in the information these should be outlined as part of the description of the evidence, and ways of addressing these gaps can be included in proposals for monitoring the implementation of the plan.

4.3 Identifying Sustainability Issues and Opportunities

Consideration of the current condition of heritage assets and any related observable trends can help in drawing conclusions as to the likely historic environment trajectory without the plan and how this might change should it be adopted. Additionally, analysis of

a range of baseline information appropriate to the type and level of plan can help identify sustainability issues relating to the historic environment. These will incorporate issues specific to the plan area. The list below is not comprehensive but outlines some examples that might be included:

- Heritage Assets at risk from neglect, decay or development pressures
- Areas where there is a threat or likelihood of further significant loss or erosion of landscape/seascape/townscape character or quality, or where development has had or potentially may have significant impact (direct and or indirect) upon the historic environment and/or people's enjoyment of it
- Traffic pollution, air quality, noise pollution and other problems affecting the historic environment
- Conserving and enhancing designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings
- Risks to previously unidentified assets including impacts on previously unidentified below ground archaeological remains
- Coastal erosion or flooding, or drainage and/or drying out of wetland heritage assets

³ Historic Environment Division's digital datasets for GIS are available for download at www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/historic-environment-digital-datasets

Conversely, there may be some opportunities for the historic environment revealed by the process, such as

- The delivery of heritage led development and supporting the vitality and viability of town centres
- Developing a strong sense of place and identity by informing design based on historic environment evidence
- Promoting innovative reuse of existing building stock and addressing heritage at risk
- Promoting heritage based tourism
- Achieving climate change resilience
- Promoting awareness, involvement and understanding of the historic environment
- Encouraging and nurturing traditional craft and building skills and using the historic environment as an educational resource

4.4 Developing the SA/SEA Framework

The appraisal framework is the method by which the likely effects of the plan on the local area are assessed and measured. It does this through setting out the objectives of the SA/SEA assessment, together with the decision-making criteria and indicators to be used to assess the degree to which the plan is likely to achieve these. In developing the framework, appropriate heritage expertise, utilising the skills of a qualified and/or professionally accredited

heritage specialist, is valuable toward ensuring that the application of the framework to the historic environment is most effective.

The inter-relationship between the historic environment and other areas to be tested by the framework can be reflected in the objectives. Sustainable development (the over-arching principle of the RDS, the SPPS and the UK MPS) requires an integrated approach and therefore, where the historic environment clearly underpins the character, economy or cultural resource of a place, it may warrant inclusion in other objectives such as regeneration, tourism, access to services, quality of life, landscape and townscape. This can be particularly true where there are areas of inter-relationship, for example, between the historic environment and economic development.

Additionally, a separate and specific objective relating to the historic environment may help avoid the masking of adverse impacts through blending several topics together in one objective.

The objectives of the SA/SEA assessment are not fixed by the EU Directive, and are often derived from environmental protection objectives identified in other plans and programmes or from the review of baseline information. The responsible authority can adapt these to take account of local circumstances. Recognising that the number of objectives needs to be manageable, the list below represents a selection where consideration of the historic environment may improve the effectiveness of the framework:

Environmental Objectives

- Protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of landscapes/seascapes/townscapes, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place
- Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment to improve local environmental quality
- Achieve high quality and sustainable design for buildings spaces and the public realm

Social Objectives

- Improve and broaden access to the local historic environment
- Provide better opportunities for people to engage with and understand local heritage and to participate in cultural and leisure activities, recognising the contribution it makes to health and well-being
- Encourage local pride and community cohesion through heritage

Economic Objectives

- Foster heritage led regeneration and address heritage at risk
- Optimise the use of brownfield sites, existing buildings and existing infrastructure
- Promoting viable and innovative re-use of historic buildings

- Promote heritage led sustainable tourism
- Support the sustainable use of the historic rural environment

Some of the example objectives outlined in the strands above overlap with each other emphasising the multiple benefits that can be realised through better recognition of the value and contribution of the historic environment.

Decision Making Criteria

The criteria for decision-making will be related to the type and level of plan or programme under consideration, as well as the characteristics and environmental sensitivity of the area in question.

Tailoring each SA/SEA in this way will help ensure that key heritage issues are incorporated in the framework and that likely effects on the historic environment are properly assessed. Examples of appropriate criteria include:

Environmental

- Will the policy or proposal

- Conserve, protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings, and the wider historic environment, sustainably with the natural environment and landscape
- Contribute to the better management of heritage assets and tackle heritage at risk
- Improve the quality and condition of the historic environment
- Respect, maintain and strengthen local character and distinctiveness
- Promote high quality design

- Integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into the historic environment sensitively
- Alter the hydrological conditions of water dependent heritage assets including organic remains (example, crannogs)

Social - Will the policy or proposal

- Increase the Social Benefit (example, education, participation, citizenship, health and well-being) derived from the historic environment
- Improve the satisfaction of people with their neighbourhoods as places to live
- Engage communities in identifying culturally important features and areas
- Provide for increased access to and enjoyment of the historic environment
- Provide for increased understanding and interpretation of the historic environment
- Provide new leisure, recreational or cultural activities

- Support and widen community uses through shared facilities

Economic - Will the policy or proposal

- Increase the economic benefit derived from the historic environment
- Promote heritage led regeneration
- Lead to the adaptive repair and re-use of a heritage asset and encourage high quality design with conservation principles
- Make the best use of existing buildings and physical infrastructure
- Promote heritage based sustainable tourism
- Ensure that repairs and maintenance are sympathetic to local character
- Help to address the number of vacant buildings through adaptive reuse

5. Developing plan options, refining alternatives and assessing likely effects

At this stage, it is for the responsible authority to confirm the scope of the SA/SEA report, together with what level of detail to present, the options within the plan itself and the alternatives that will be considered. Consideration of the effects on cultural heritage of these options and alternatives will help ensure that it fully complies with the EU SEA Directive and achieves a rounded assessment of the likely environmental impacts.

5.1 Evaluating Potential Significant Effects

The over-arching principle when assessing the plan and reasonable alternatives will be the extent to which they give rise to adverse environmental impacts, including those on the historic environment (both terrestrial and marine). Where such adverse impacts cannot be avoided, mitigation measures should be considered to minimise the impacts.

Identification and prediction of significant effects (both positive and negative) on the historic environment may involve:

- Loss of, or damage to the significance of any heritage asset and /or its setting
- Conservation and enhancement of any heritage asset and/or its setting
- Loss of or erosion to the historic character of the landscape/seascape/townscape
- Impact on the “at risk” status of assets as well as the level of risk to the wider historic environment

- Impact on the wider area outside the plan area, example, traffic generation, setting issues.
- Cumulative, secondary or synergistic impacts on the historic environment, heritage assets and places, these can occur:
 1. Cumulative -where individually minor impacts can accumulate to have significant effects
 2. Synergistic -where separate minor impacts interact to produce a total effect greater than the sum of the individual effects

Secondary or indirect - where effects are not a direct result of the plan but occur away from the original effect as a result of its impacts. Consideration should be given to:

- The accumulation of effects on different but related environmental assets including heritage assets, natural landscape/seascape and townscape
- Identified baseline trends may be relevant. Example, to avoid contributing to a further deterioration of an already adverse trend

Clarity in assessing impacts specifically on the historic environment is helpful in understanding their relationship to the wider environmental assessment. For example, where scoring techniques are used, adding scores together can mask highly adverse impacts through conflation with less adverse

ones. Instead, being more specific about the nature of anticipated negative outcomes can help identify measures to avoid them. The following principles may be helpful in assessing impacts on the historic environment and their subsequent integration with the wider assessment of the plan:

- Where a mutually beneficial option cannot be developed, choices between conflicting environmental objectives can be justified by demonstrating relative impacts on each.
- Reconciling socio-economic environmental objectives is important to plan-making in terms of achieving sustainable development. Where the best environmental option is not selected, for example where significant harm to the historic environment will result, the SPPS and UK MPS requires it to be demonstrated clearly, the wider public benefit that will be achieved to justify this.
- Where a chosen option has potential for significant environmental effects, it will benefit from rigorous testing in comparison with less environmentally harmful options.

The staged approach to the SA/SEA of the emerging plan, reflecting the different stages of plan development, may result in the identification of options that achieve benefits for the historic environment. Potential significant effects might be identified at the early stages of the plan's development, which with further work can be shown not to be negative. For example, it may be possible to demonstrate that development proposals can be accommodated without harm to character and appearance and the accumulation of data may support new

understanding about the historic environment within the plan area; specific policy criteria can be added to ensure this.

5.2 Mitigation

The avoidance of damage to all heritage assets remains highly desirable owing to the finite nature of the resource. Alternative proposals that avoid or result in less harm to the historic environment should be considered preferential, before considering whether mitigation appropriate to the level of impact and type of harm involved can be identified.

Consideration can be given to mitigation measures that enhance the historic environment. Compensation measures (offsetting) are not usually appropriate, as heritage assets cannot be re-created once removed. Examples of possible mitigation measures for the historic environment might include:

- Strengthened reference to the historic environment in the policy framework, criteria and guidance example, addition of a specific historic environment policy, regeneration policies, planning obligations
- Preparation of detailed historic environment policy guidance. Example, design guides
- Heritage conservation requirements including positive measures to promote the conservation and enjoyment of heritage assets within site specific development policies

- Undertaking of detailed historic characterisation studies to inform development proposals or zoning, including for Local Landscape Policy Areas
- Environmental Impact Assessments, (EIA Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU) particularly supporting technical appendices that focus on archaeological interpretation
- Specific conditions included within planning permissions or other regulatory consents

- Preparation of management plans for heritage assets
- Completion of feasibility studies to help facilitate the sustainable reuse of a heritage asset

Mitigation measures for the implementation stage of a planning application are the most appropriate method of dealing with situations where damage cannot be avoided.

6. Preparing, publishing and consulting on the SA/SEA report

The report will be proportionate to the type of plan under consideration and the environmental sensitivity of the area in question. However, a comprehensive and robust SA/SEA report may demonstrate the following in respect of the historic environment:

- The significance of the heritage asset (including their settings) within and adjacent to the plan or programme area(s)
- How the proposed plan policies and plan alternatives impact on the significance of the heritage assets (including their settings)
- What steps can be taken to avoid or minimise any adverse impacts on the significance of heritage assets (including their settings)

A robust report will be able to identify the nature and extent of significant effects with respect to specific geographical locations/ sub-areas, asset type(s) and effects over time. It can be extremely helpful to set out key findings of the appraisal process, including mitigation measures, in the main body of the report and in a Non-Technical Summary (a summary aimed at a non-expert audience). Where there is a specific section on cultural heritage, this might seek to achieve the following objectives:

- Establish the historic environment baseline identified following consultation on the scoping report, including trends and gaps in the existing data, with notes on sources and any problems encountered, and any other assessment undertaken

- Summarise the relevant plans, policies and programmes identified following consultation on the scoping report and highlight any identified synergies or inconsistencies
- Identify issues and opportunities for the historic environment and heritage assets
- Set out the proposed sustainability appraisal framework, including SA/SEA objectives, indicators and targets for the historic environment
- Include a summary of the results of the assessment, i.e. predict and evaluate the potential impacts of the plan (including trans-boundary and/or cumulative impacts) on the historic environment and heritage assets
- Recommend mitigation measures including recommended changes to the plan to provide optimal outcomes for the historic environment and heritage assets
- Identify where harmful residual impacts cannot be avoided
- Set out how comments at earlier stages on the treatment of the historic environment in the appraisal process have been taken into account
- Record how the process has informed the selection of options/alternatives
- Record how the plan or programme has changed in response to the SA/SEA
- Clearly identify where recommendations of the SA/SEA have not been incorporated in the plan, with an explanation of why this is the case

The SEA Directive requires the information in the report and the responses to consultation to be taken into account during the preparation of the plan and before the final decision is taken to adopt it. Responsible authorities must produce a summary of how they have taken these findings into account, and how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan together with clarity on changes made as a result. They should also demonstrate that they've established arrangements to monitor the significant effects of the implementation of the plan, to identify unforeseen adverse effects and identify remedial actions.

Information on the historic environment gathered as part of the SA/SEA process can usefully be added to a local Historic Environment evidence base (potentially as local listings) and to the National Monuments and Buildings Record for Northern Ireland, where appropriate. This is valuable as it will ensure that new information further adds to the local evidence-base relating to the historic environment and will contribute toward informing future planning and development activity and decisions.



“Helping communities to enjoy and realise the value of our historic environment”

Historic Environment Division

Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG

Tel: 028 9082 3177 / 028 9082 3126

Email: historicenvironmentenquiries@communities-ni.gov.uk

Web: www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/historic-environment

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