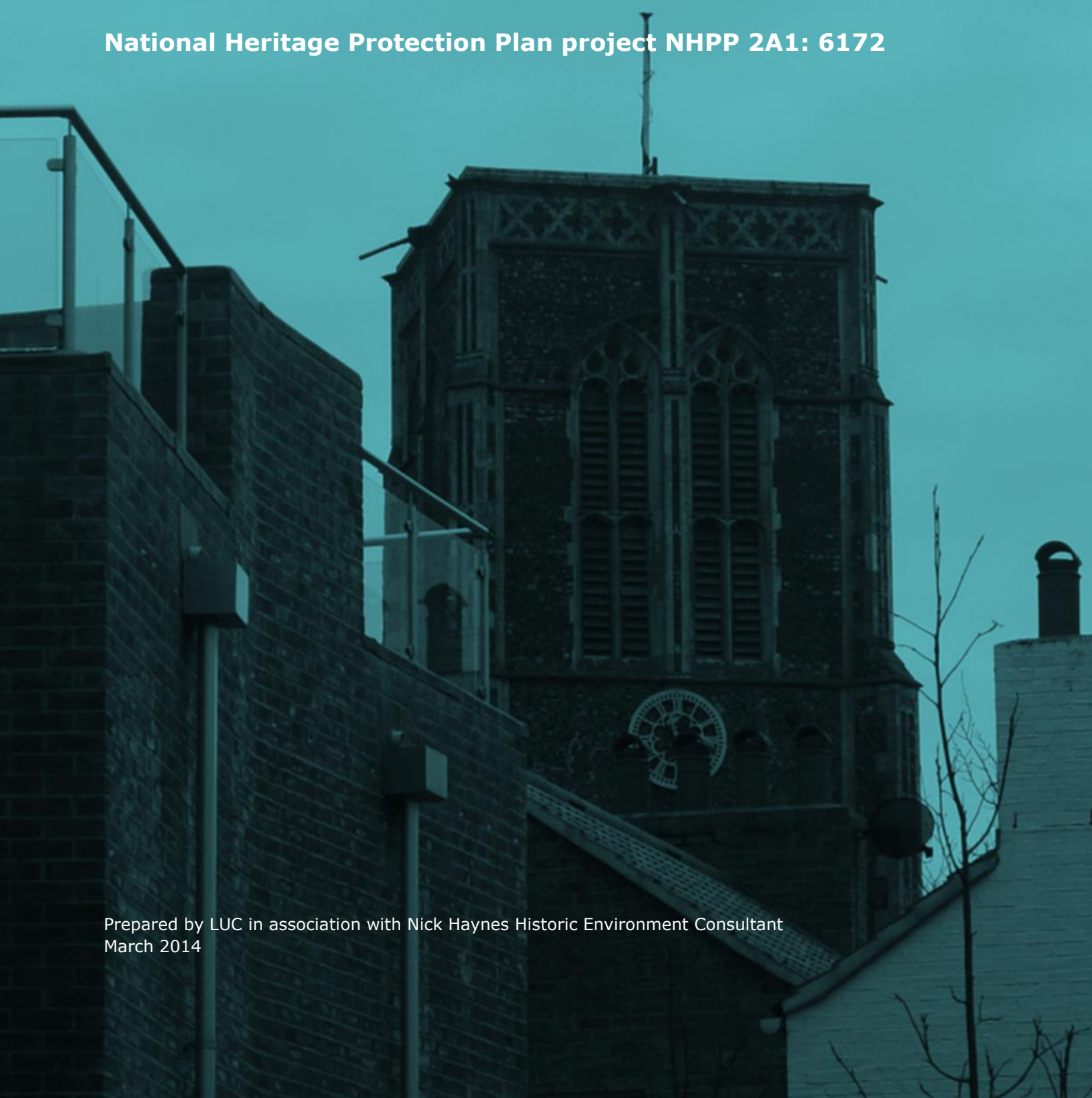




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Evaluating the impact of housing development on the historic environment

National Heritage Protection Plan project NHPP 2A1: 6172



Prepared by LUC in association with Nick Haynes Historic Environment Consultant
March 2014

Project Title: Evaluating the impact of housing development on the historic environment

Client: English Heritage

Version	Date	Version Details	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by Principal
0.3	12/03/14	Draft	MM; NH; SMO	SMO	
1	18/03/14	Approved draft	MM; NH; SMO	SMO	JO
2	27/03/14	Final	MM; NH; SMO	SMO	JO

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Executive summary

Executive summary

Background

LUC was commissioned in May 2013, through English Heritage's National Heritage Protection Plan research programme, to undertake research into the effects of larger-scale housing development on the historic environment. The project was intended to address the following aims:

- Provide a 'library' of case studies of completed housing developments of varying size and type across a range of locations.
- Analyse and evaluate the impact of the development in question on the historic environment and character of the development site itself and the surrounding area.
- Identify, describe and evaluate the success or otherwise of various strategies and policies used by the relevant local planning authorities to ensure that the housing in question is integrated well with its surroundings.

Case studies

Drawing on quantitative and qualitative data on development pressure, heritage sensitivities and the distribution of key development types, case studies were selected from across England for detailed examination. Encompassing a range of contexts, development approaches and outcomes, these were:

- 'Accordia', Cambridge
- Axwell Park, Gateshead
- Bellrope Meadow, Thaxted, Essex
- Graylingwell Hospital, Chichester
- Hanham Hall, South Gloucestershire
- Merchant's Quay, Gloucester
- New Islington, Manchester
- Alliance House student housing, Newington Green, London Borough of Hackney
- Settlement expansion, Papworth Everard, South Cambridgeshire
- 'Tibby's Triangle', Southwold
- Weedon Hill Major Development Area, Aylesbury

Key findings

Nationwide, many LPAs are making use of a wide range of tools to shape development in historic contexts, the most effective of which include:

- Development-led characterisation approaches, providing an objective evidence base to inform masterplanning and detailed design
- Detailed planning and development briefs, setting clear conservation and management priorities and planning tests – helping to ensure certainty for all parties
- Conservation-led, asset-specific guidance and policy based on robust evidence, establishing frameworks for acceptable interventions

These tools can help to encourage good quality applications, but a further challenge for LPAs is ensuring that the conservation and management of historic features agreed through the planning process are delivered 'on the ground'. Monitoring of conditions and delivery on legal agreements is difficult, particularly in resource-constrained circumstances.

Perhaps the key lesson from the research is that for any design or assessment tool to be genuinely successful it needs to be well integrated with planning policy and be supported by the availability of expert advice on the historic environment.

Recommendations

- Research into approaches used to assess potential effects on setting at the strategic level (e.g. SA/SEA of land allocations); addressing identified weakness in previous approaches
- Need for existing advice and guidance to 'work harder' for LPAs through integration with Local Plan policies, and adoption as supplementary guidance where possible to ensure key considerations are given appropriate weight
- Research into the efficacy of post-consent monitoring and enforcement on the delivery of benefits by development affecting the historic environment

1 Introduction

1 Introduction

- 1.1 LUC was commissioned in May 2013, through English Heritage's National Heritage Protection Plan research programme, to undertake research into the effects of larger-scale housing development on the historic environment.

Aims and objectives

- 1.2 As part of 'activity group 2A1' – designed to create a greater understanding within English Heritage (EH) of development trends and the pressures exerted on the historic environment – this project (6172) aims to **'develop the evidence base in relation to the effects of larger-scale housing development on the historic environment, and a greater understanding of successful (and unsuccessful) methods of mitigating and managing these effects in order to demonstrate actual impact as against expected or forecast impacts.'**
- 1.3 The project was required to:
- 1 Provide a 'library' of case studies of completed housing developments of varying size and type across a range of locations.
 - 2 Analyse and evaluate the impact of the development in question on the historic environment and character of the development site itself and the surrounding area.
 - 3 Identify, describe and evaluate the success or otherwise of various strategies and policies used by the relevant local planning authorities to ensure that the housing in question is integrated well with its surroundings.

Scope

- 1.4 The project sought example developments from right across England, with the final shortlisted 11 representing the end of a lengthy process of data gathering and interpretation, consultation with EH officers and discussion within the project steering group.
- 1.5 The project sought to analyse and reach conclusions relating to the specific housing developments selected, and then seek to identify and extrapolate overall trends which appear to have relevance across the country as a whole. It deals only with housing development that can be considered to be 'larger scale' within its context.

Background to the study

- 1.6 Prevailing economic conditions since 2008 have significantly depressed housing consents and completions, and have introduced additional complexity to the delivery of schemes already in the pipeline. This period has also seen substantial regulatory and policy evolution, through a change in government in 2010 and the implementation of the 'Localism' agenda and its consequent impacts on planning policy and processes. This means that, while the case studies presented in this report provide useful and potentially instructive conclusions, the policy landscape into which the coming generation of housing developments emerges is likely to be substantially different.
- 1.7 National policy directly relating to heritage has changed relatively little as a consequence of the National Planning Policy Framework. However, the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' and the government's vision of the housing market as a driver (rather than an indicator) of economic recovery could be interpreted as placing additional pressure on Local

Planning Authorities to both find space for new housing, and to grant permission to those schemes coming forward.

- 1.8 The new requirements for Local Plans, and the strict timescale imposed by government, has spurred the production of Core Strategies. As of February 2014, 52% of LPAs had adopted Core Strategies in place (although only 43% are technically in date, with 19 plans being more than five years old). While this marks a substantial improvement on previous rates of production for outgoing Local Development Frameworks, it does raise some questions around the ways in which new housing allocations are being assessed for their potential impacts on the historic environment. Although this was not the focus of this study, it offers potential insights into the robustness of the methods of assessment applied, albeit founded on a very limited evidence base.

Structure of the report

- 1.9 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Study methodology;**
- **Case studies:**
 - 'Accordia', Cambridge;
 - Axwell Park, Gateshead;
 - Bellrope Meadow, Thaxted, Essex;
 - Graylingwell Hospital, Chichester;
 - Hanham Hall, South Gloucestershire;
 - Merchant's Quay, Gloucester;
 - New Islington, Manchester;
 - Alliance House student housing, Newington Green, London Borough of Hackney;
 - Settlement expansion, Papworth Everard, South Cambridgeshire;
 - 'Tibby's Triangle', Southwold;
 - Weedon Hill Major Development Area, Aylesbury.
- **Research outcomes:**
 - Summary
 - Evaluation of assessment tools and techniques applied;
 - Evaluation of policy frameworks;
 - Identification and evaluation of process issues.
- **Conclusions and recommendations.**

2

Study methodology

2 Study methodology

Introduction

- 2.1 This section of the report sets out the approach employed in undertaking the study. It represents the evolution of the project design from the original brief and LUC's approach as tendered, to a more workable solution.

Background research

Introduction

- 2.2 As agreed with English Heritage, the first stage of the project entailed undertaking extensive research on the patterns of housing development across England from c.2004 onwards, to aid understanding of:

- **Patterns of housing development:**
 - Location of development pressure, and any changes through time, taking cognisance of:
 - Urban / rural differences, concentrations of population and economic activity;
 - Coincidence with concentrations of designated heritage assets;
 - Identifying potential 'target' local planning authorities (LPA) experiencing intense development pressure.
- **Development typology:**
 - Assisting in the definition of 'larger-scale';
 - Concentrations of particular forms of housing development in sensitive historic environments, e.g.:
 - settlement expansion, in-fill, conversion of historic buildings, urban regeneration projects (such as Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Projects).
- **Available tools and techniques for assessing and mitigating effects of development on the historic environment**
- **Potential process issues influencing the success of development in historic contexts**

- 2.3 This process was intended to furnish the project team with a solid understanding of the types of housing development prevalent in England between approximately 2004 and 2012, the most heavily affected receiving environments and the approaches taken by LPAs and developers to understanding and avoiding, reducing or offsetting adverse effects on the historic environment.

Patterns of housing applications, consents and completions

Overall activity

- 2.4 Initially, it was envisaged that a longitudinal study, using Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) planning statistics, could be undertaken that would provide detailed insights on housing consents across the project time horizon. Unfortunately, this proved impractical due to frequent changes in the approach employed in collecting development control/management statistics¹. This meant that the ability to identify major housing development by planning authority was not readily possible across the full project time horizon. Similarly, completions data

¹ Partly a consequence of the introduction, and then loss of, regional reporting structures and local government reorganisation (i.e. 2009 tranche of amalgamation of borough/district authorities to form the new, larger unitary authorities of Cornwall, Durham, Northumberland, Shropshire and Wiltshire) and changing demands on ONS resources

Housing completions in England, 2000-2013 by sector

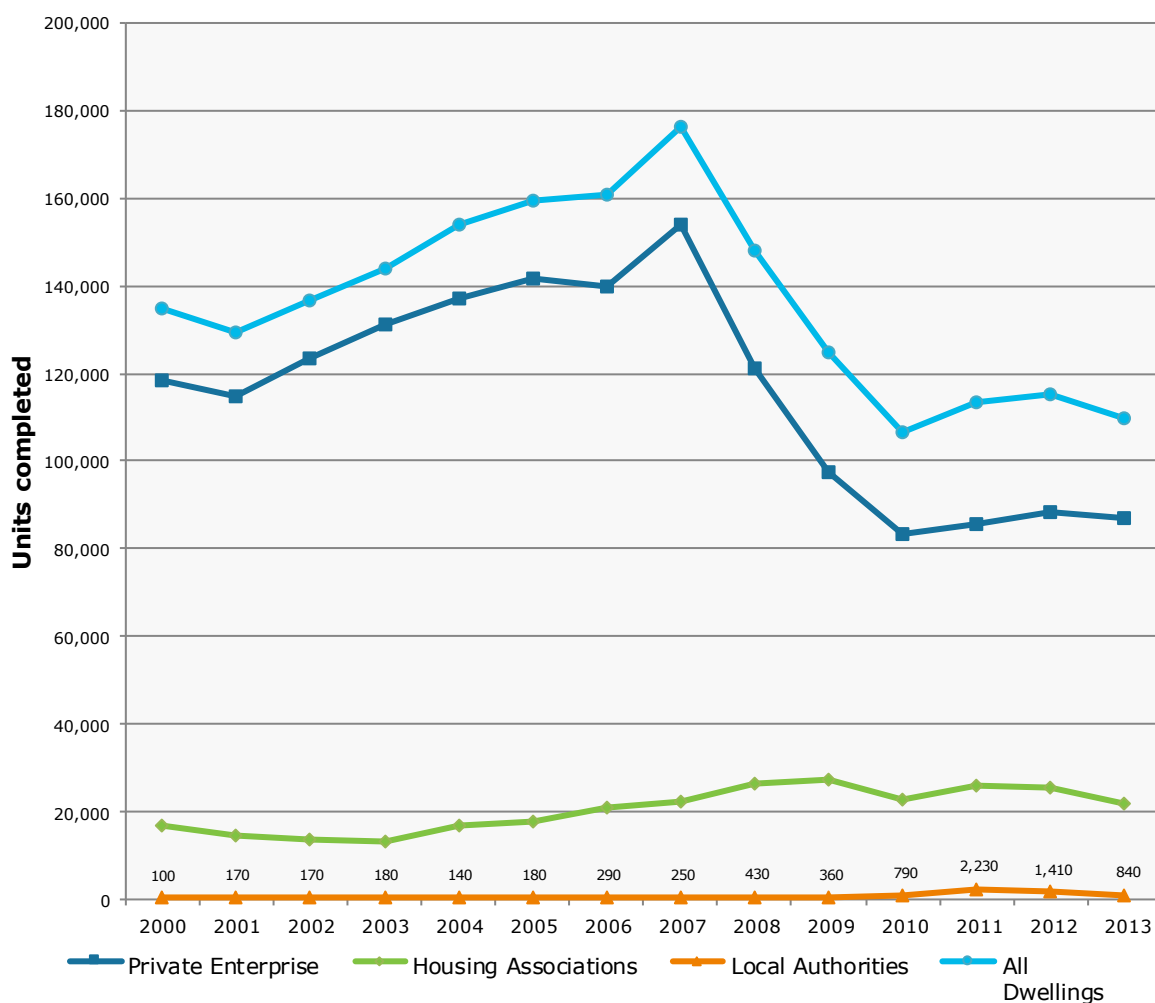


Figure 2.2.1: Housing completions in England, 2000-2013 (Source: DCLG live tables)

is not disaggregated by planning authority, so direct comparison between applications, consents and completions is not possible².

- 2.5 The exercise did, however, provide some useful confirmation of the pre- and post-financial crisis patterns of housing development activity. Perhaps the most instructive – and compelling – statistics are those for housing completions, as illustrated in Figure 2.2.1. This reveals the significance of the drop-off in housing activity experienced in 2008 and the continued reduction in completions as the effects of the crisis took hold; causing both schemes in progress to ‘stall’ due to loss of financing, and developers delaying commencement on site. These factors resulted in the rate of completions almost halving between 2007 and 2010.
- 2.6 Similarly, the rates of planning applications for housing development experienced a sharp decline during the same period, with activity dropping from a high of 79,600 applications in 2007/8 to 49,800 applications in 2009 – a 38% reduction in activity. Despite a minor increase in 2010, activity maintained constant and substantially reduced level through 2012. Figures available to September 2013 indicate a slight increase in activity, as illustrated in Figure 2.2.2 below, but the significance of this increase remains to be seen.

² This is compounded by the fact that housing statistics are recorded by number of **units** completed, whereas planning statistics only deal with numbers of applications

Housing applications in England

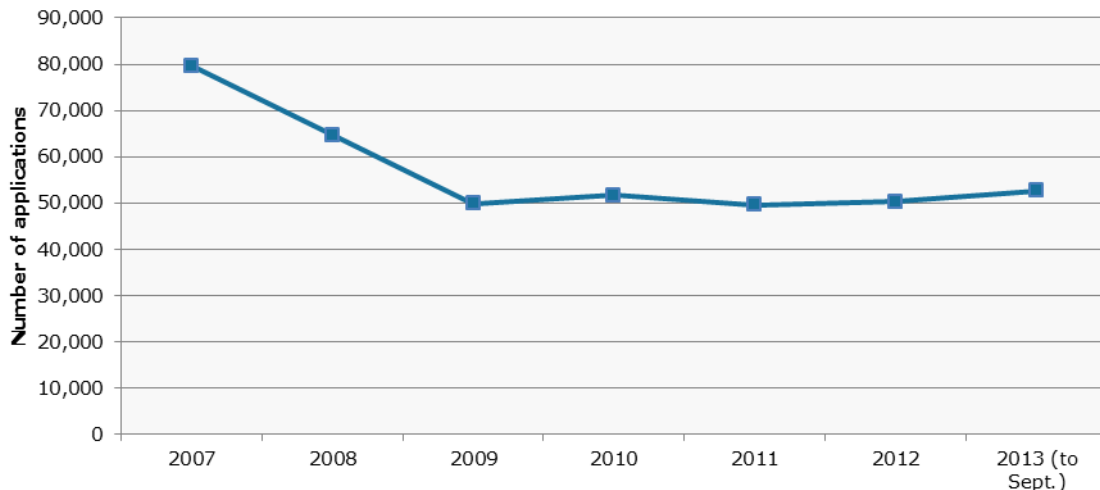


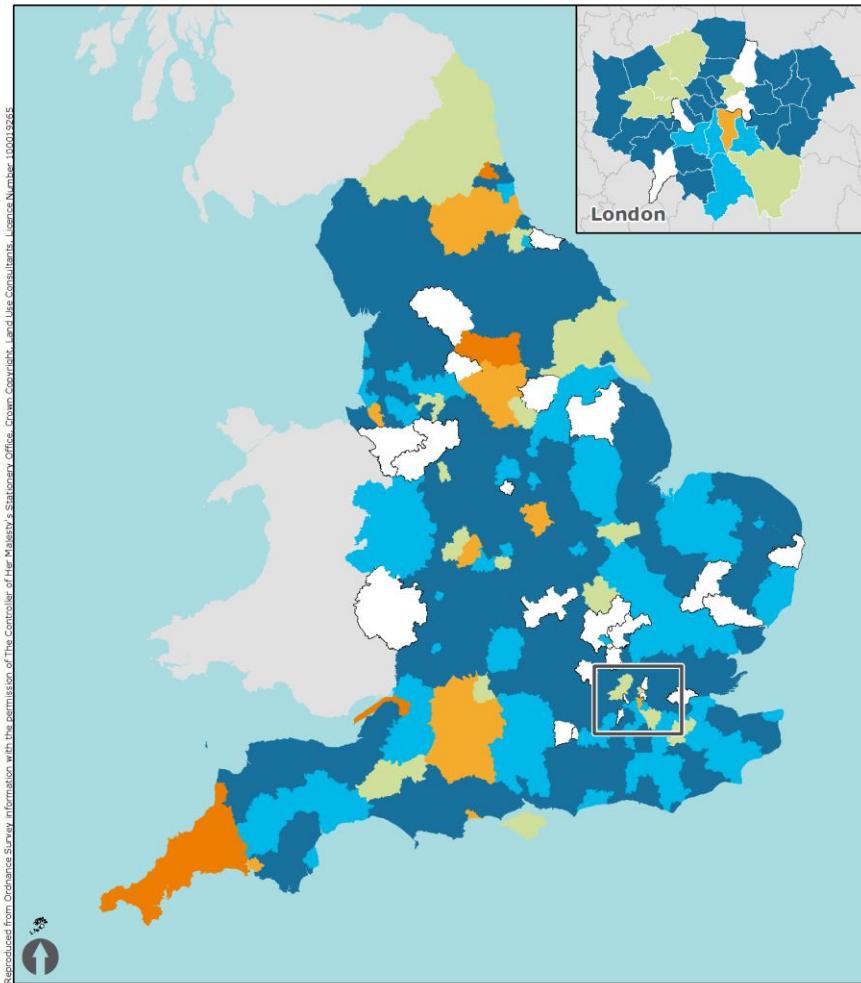
Figure 2.2.2: All housing applications in England, 2007-13 (Source: collated DCLG statistics normalised to calendar years)

Spatial distinctions

- 2.7 Where data could be directly compared, there was obvious spatial differentiation in the concentration of development activity, with applications and consents for large-scale housing development slowing dramatically across large areas of England in 2010, as Figure depicts. However, attributing precise causation – beyond prolonged nationwide recession – to this pattern is difficult. Larger unitary authorities, such as Cornwall and Wiltshire, maintained relatively high levels of activity through the recession. This is both a product of their comparatively large size and large populations, and also a visible concentration of housing activity. The slowdown was similarly marked in many London boroughs – albeit subject to comparatively quicker recovery.
- 2.8 While the often-assumed ‘north-south divide’ is somewhat evident in patterns of development during this period, it is not strictly uniform. Ongoing regeneration activity, for example in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Leeds and Bradford – and to a lesser extent much of West Yorkshire (Barnsley, Kirklees, Wakefield and Sheffield) – stands out against much lower levels of activity across the north. County Durham is potentially an outlier, being a largely rural authority but with a number of larger settlements (Durham, Chester-le-Street, Bishop Auckland and Peterlee) attracting development activity.

Correlation with sensitive historic environments

- 2.9 In parallel, spatial analysis was conducted using publicly available data on designated heritage assets, to provide an indication of heritage sensitivity at the planning authority scale. However, this was generally at too coarse a resolution to assist in the identification of useful cases. When combined with development statistics, this was useful in highlighting areas likely to already be experiencing pressure on their historic environment [and, helpfully, corroborating the forward-looking findings of NHPP project 6170].
- 2.10 The outputs of this process were used to inform discussion amongst the project steering group and target requests for proposals from EH local staff.



Legend

Housing planning permissions

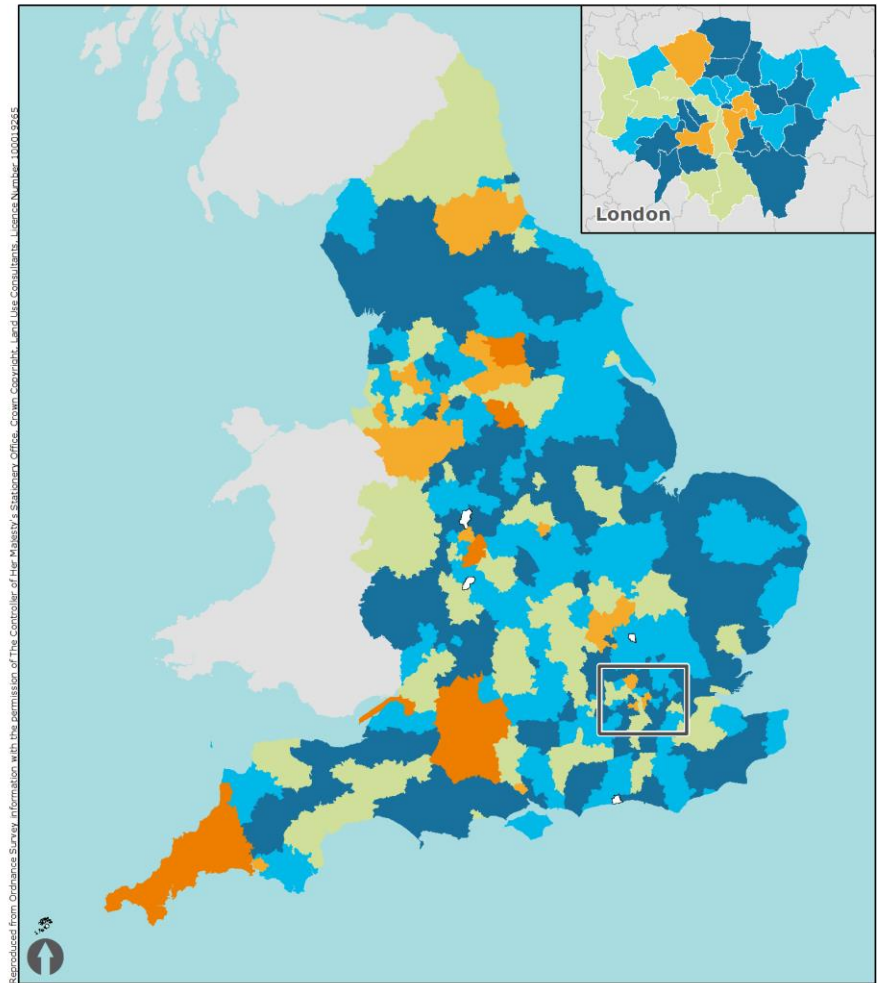
2010 Major developments

	0	
	1 - 11	DCLG planning statistics (2010)
	12 - 19	Number of records in class shown in round brackets.
	20 - 28	
	29 - 44	Classes defined using Jencks natural breaks
	45 - 70	

Impacts of large-scale housing development

Housing consents:
Major developments
2010

Scale at A4:
1:3,200,000



Legend

Housing planning permissions

2012 Major developments

	0 (5)	
	1 - 8 (126)	DCLG planning statistics (2012)
	9 - 15 (100)	Number of records in class shown in round brackets.
	16 - 25 (70)	
	28 - 45 (19)	Classes defined using Jencks natural breaks
	49 - 83 (6)	

Impacts of large-scale housing development

Housing consents:
Major developments
2012

Scale at A4:
1:3,200,000



Figure 2.3: Major housing planning permissions - contrast between 2010 and 2012 figures

Application to case study selection

- 2.11 It was intended that the spatial analysis of development pressure would inform the approach to seeking and selecting potential case study projects. A number of 'target' local authorities were identified, and recent housing development was researched in some detail using a combination of LPA web resources, developer publicity materials and local knowledge.
- 2.12 However, it became quickly apparent that relying on local knowledge and applying a 'bottom-up' approach was likely to be more efficient for a number of reasons. Although the analysis was helpful in identifying areas of development pressure within the project target period, and the general sensitivity of local historic environments (albeit at a very strategic level), there was no effective way of making the leap from this general level to the individual case level without drawing on detailed local knowledge.

Potential future issues

- 2.13 The pointers provided by the research exercise, and the evolving policy framework, raises some potentially interesting questions on the likely nature of housing growth as the putative economic recovery takes hold (beyond the delivery of committed development).
- 2.14 During the time horizon of the study, LPAs have been under pressure to deliver new Local Plans and the supply of housing land required to meet local targets under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 47 of the NPPF requires local plans to secure and annually update a five-year supply of specific, deliverable sites with a +5% buffer [20% in areas of historical under-delivery]; and, specific developable sites, or broad locations for growth, out to at least 10 years.
- 2.15 While this is broadly similar to the requirements under the previous development planning system, NPPF states that LPAs are expected to *'...boost significantly the supply of housing'* – implying that there is systemic under-provision of housing land. Paragraph 48 requires LPAs to consider housing applications in the context of the NPPF's *'presumption in favour of sustainable development'*. It then goes on to provide a means of challenge to local policies; suggesting that if LPAs cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, their policies *'should not be considered up-to-date'*. Effectively, this means that LPAs are at the mercy of volatile market conditions that could potentially evolve significantly between iterations of needs and site assessments³. Maintaining rolling programmes of housing needs assessment, and attendant site selection and Sustainability Appraisal processes are likely to place a substantial burden on LPAs in areas of high demand for housing. In parallel, the removal of a regional overview of housing needs and environmental assets and constraints – previously provided by Regional Spatial Strategies – perhaps reduces the potential to direct development to less sensitive areas.

³ This is likely to prove a significant challenge for urban authorities, as the NPPF requires that, to be considered deliverable, *'sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable.'* [Footnote 11, p.12 of NPPF] This is a very high bar to meet if brownfield sites, potentially requiring remediation, are the principal source of housing land.

Site-specific research

Development typology

- 2.16 Larger-scale housing development in England takes a wide range of forms, depending on context, market and originator. Understanding and capturing a reasonably representative sample of these development forms, in addition to a broad geographical distribution, was a key requirement in ensuring a balanced spread of case studies.

Scale

- 2.17 Defining 'larger-scale' housing development was a key element of the project, ensuring that effort was focussed on schemes likely to have more significant impacts, necessitate the involvement of a range of assessment tools and techniques and, where appropriate, require input from EH and local curatorial staff.
- 2.18 It was felt that larger schemes are often more difficult to accommodate in areas of high heritage sensitivity due to intrinsic issues of physical scale, density and design issues.
- Scale: increased size of developments increases the probability of physical impacts on heritage assets, most notably buried archaeology. Similarly, larger size also increases the potential for impacts on the setting of heritage assets.
 - Density: differing density between modern and neighbouring historic development can produce undesirable effects – both as a result of increased density (e.g. through the insertion of apartments), or reduced density (e.g. 'suburbanisation' of edges of historic settlements through inappropriate or generic urban form and building design).
 - Design: reflecting the urban grain and local building forms, styles and materials is potentially more difficult at larger scales, across multiple units.
- 2.19 Rather than using a minimum number of units as the defining factor, it was agreed that context should be the determining issue in characterising 'larger-scale' developments.
- 2.20 In this context, 'larger-scale' housing was therefore held to comprise development that:
- Delivered multiple housing units, chiefly for long-term residential use⁴;
 - Made a substantive contribution to meeting local housing targets/needs;
 - Had the potential for significant effects on the character, significance or quality of the historic environment.

Type

- 2.21 Example projects were therefore sought in the following broad categories:

Table 2.1: Summary of development types

Development type	Commentary
Conversion / restoration of non-residential historic buildings for new housing	Conversion schemes form a significant element of new housing development, particularly in urban areas and in connection with regeneration schemes, where re-use of industrial buildings is common
In-fill development	Inserting new development within the form / grain of historic settlements
Insertion of new housing in historic landscapes	Inserting new housing development within historic gardens and designed landscapes, potentially as enabling development to fund restoration, has significant potential for adverse effects – but also for substantial conservation gain. Development in areas of sensitive historic landscape character, e.g. affecting relict field patterns and setting of historic town/village.
Settlement expansion / urban	New extensions to settlements are a key option for LPAs in delivering

⁴ Excluding development intended principally as holiday homes or serviced apartments – but including student housing

Development type	Commentary
extension	<p>projected housing growth in historic towns with no capacity for substantial in-fill or redevelopment within existing settlement boundaries.</p> <p>Such development is a key challenge, in that it has significant potential for impacts on the setting of historic towns and assets in the urban fringe. Strategic assessment of effects on the historic environment is therefore critical as, once allocated in the development plan, the principle of development in that location is established.</p>
New settlement	<p>Establishment of new, discrete communities in outside established settlement boundaries (e.g. 'Eco-villages' and 'garden suburbs').</p> <p>Challenges of infrastructure, service and amenity provision along with housing development.</p>
Enabling development	<p><i>'Enabling development' is development that would be unacceptable in planning terms but for the fact that it would bring public benefits sufficient to justify it being carried out, and which could not otherwise be achieved (EH, 1999; 2008).</i></p> <p>Housing within the curtilage of historic buildings and in associated designed landscapes are often an attractive prospect for developers seeking a 'unique selling point', and have potential value in addressing conservation deficits for assets that have no other viable prospect of a sustainable future.</p> <p>Close monitoring of delivery against conservation objectives is a significant challenge in such cases.</p>

Location

- 2.22 The geographical location of housing development is frequently a useful proxy for understanding the drivers and influencing factors for site selection, design and scale decisions taken in bringing forward schemes. For example, the extensive Housing Market Renewal Initiative 'Pathfinder Projects', in the former industrial centres of the North and Midlands, are a clear example of location-specific responses to particular social and economic drivers. Similarly, large settlement expansion proposals within London's 'commuter belt' – often around historic market towns – meet an externally-driven need for new housing within around one hour's travelling time from central London.
- 2.23 It was therefore necessary to seek a range of case studies that represented the main foci of development in England, providing a samples of projects in:
- Historic city centre locations;
 - Market towns;
 - Urban edge / settlement expansion; and
 - 'Green-field' development in more rural areas.
- 2.24 It was, however, agreed that the primary objective was to secure good quality case studies that provided an appropriate range of potential lessons – rather than focussing on geographical representation for its own sake.

Interaction with the historic environment

- 2.25 Clearly, a critical factor for inclusion of potential studies was some level of interaction with the historic environment – whether relating to individual assets or wider historic character. Candidate projects were sought that were likely to have some measure of impact on designated and/or locally significant heritage assets (whether direct or on their settings). Similarly, a location with demonstrable historic character that should have influenced the assessment and design processes, as well as decision-making, was a prerequisite.
- 2.26 Candidate projects were therefore sought to ensure that historic buildings, archaeological sites and landscapes, gardens and designed landscapes and areas of townscape significance were included.

Engagement with EH officers

- 2.27 In parallel with the 'top-down' analysis of statistical evidence summarised above, EH local staff were contacted – through the Project Assurance Officer – to provide insights into recent patterns of housing development in their areas and to put forward suggested case study projects.
- 2.28 This was felt to be the most direct means of identifying cases that were of an appropriately large scale in their context, and involved a meaningful level of interaction with the historic environment.

Design-led approach sourcing example projects

- 2.29 In addition to the contribution of EH colleagues, the project team sought a range of potential examples through a range of sources, including RIBA and Housing Design Awards shortlists. This process was helpful in ensuring that a suitable range of good quality schemes were available for discussion.
- 2.30 A number of schemes on the final shortlist therefore feature award-winning architecture – including the prestigious RIBA Stirling Prize, awarded to the Accordia development in Cambridge – and include a range of responses to the historic environment.

Tools and techniques for understanding heritage impacts

Design and assessment tools

- 2.31 The approaches taken to understanding the character and significance of the historic environment, and to assessing, avoiding, reducing and offsetting impacts on assets, were an important consideration in selecting potential case studies.
- 2.32 It was intended that the case studies would provide insights on the application and efficacy of the following:
- Historic environment and historic landscape characterisation studies:
 - Ideally including examples at the strategic and the site-specific level;
 - Conservation Area and townscape character appraisals;
 - Historic Area Assessment;
 - Masterplans;
 - Planning and development briefs;
 - Local and regional design guidance;
 - Asset- or area-specific planning guidance and design principles (e.g. Supplementary Planning Guidance on development in Conservation Areas);
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (as part of the assessment of impact on the settings of heritage assets);
 - National and local planning policy frameworks;
 - Design and Access Statements.
- 2.33 Clearly, the assessment of these approaches had to operate at two levels: in terms of developers assessing the potential effects and designing their schemes; and in influencing the decision-making processes of LPAs.
- 2.34 Significant resources have been expended by local and national government on developing these tools, therefore understanding the value added to development proposals is important in either supporting future work, or influencing decisions to prioritise.

Role of professional advice and guidance

- 2.35 While the provision and application of a range of design and assessment tools can play a significant role in the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, the importance

of appropriate professional advice in interpreting and applying this information cannot be underestimated.

- 2.36 Understanding how the information provided by the relevant guidance framework has been mediated by historic environment professionals – both on behalf of the developer and within the LPA – was therefore an important consideration in the detailed assessment of projects. (It should, however, be noted that this was not always possible through the materials retained on file by LPAs.)

Potential process issues

Application and pre-consent

- 2.37 The planning process for major housing development can be a complex and often convoluted exercise, particularly where extensive phasing is involved. This can result in applications for outline (or, increasingly, hybrid⁵) planning permission being followed by a series of concurrent and sequential applications for approval of reserved matters; applications for full permission and negotiation of matters specified in conditions. Similarly, the negotiation of Section 106 Obligations⁶, particularly where ongoing management of heritage assets is a key feature, adds further complexity. There is a substantial administrative challenge for LPAs in project managing such applications and ensuring that the 'drip-feed' of information is subject to appropriate scrutiny and consultation.

Post-consent

- 2.38 In complex cases, where there can frequently be upwards of 40 planning conditions and extensive phased S.106 obligations, keeping track of delivery can be a significant challenge. Necessitating specialist input, site visits and high levels of developer cooperation, determining whether agreed objectives are being met – and taking enforcement action where breaches of planning control are identified – is a potential pinch-point for hard-pressed LPAs. However, where conditions and obligations are employed to secure heritage management / enhancement – especially where a conservation deficit is being addressed through enabling development – they are a critical tool, and only effective if closely monitored.
- 2.39 Post-consent changes to schemes, particularly in the recent climate of financial constraint on developers (backed by government pressure to relax requirements of S.106 obligations to re-enable stalled development), was also identified as a potential source of impacts that is largely beyond the scope of normal assessment. 'Value engineering' was identified as a potential concern with regard to watering down of conservation interventions, reducing the quality of materials and detailing and limiting the value added / opportunities for enhancement that could be delivered by development.

Selecting the case study projects

- 2.40 In partnership with EH, a 'long-list' of 34 developments – from an initial selection of around 50 projects – was collated and appraised, using a matrix-based approach, to compare their relative merits and alignment with the key qualities outlined above. From this group, a final shortlist of 11 case studies was selected, also taking into account likely information availability based on material accessible via LPA e-planning websites.
- 2.41 The final selection, set out in Table 2.2 below, was considered to represent the best available balance of cases, fulfilling the majority of necessary criteria.

⁵ Where developers submit applications for outline consent for a whole site, accompanied by a detailed application for a portion of the proposed development (generally the first of many phases).

⁶ Legally-binding obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended

Table 2.2: Case study shortlist

Name	Planning authority	Urban	Peri-urban	Smaller settlement / Rural	New build	Brownfield	In-fill	Re-use / convert	Interaction with historic environment
'Accordia'	Cambridge CC								In setting of Grade II Brooklands House, and within part of former estate (substantial elements of former designed landscape structure on site); demolition of Cold War 'continuity of government' bunker – refused on call-in by Secretary of State; adjacent to Conservation Area (extended to include development in 2013)
Axwell Park	Gateshead MBC					Partial			Conversion of Grade II* Axwell Hall, clearance of 20 th century institutional additions in locally significant designed landscape (designated as Conservation Area); enabling housing development in former walled garden and adjacent to Hall
Bellrope Meadow, Thaxted	Uttlesford DC								Green-field development on edge of highly sensitive historic town; relatively sensitive historic landscape structure and character
Graylingwell	Chichester CC								Conversion of unlisted, but locally important, 19 th century asylum set in a Grade II Registered park (also Conservation Area); demolition of later additions/insertions; extensive new-build in designed landscape. Chichester Dyke, Scheduled prehistoric earthwork, crosses the site
Hanham Hall	South Gloucestershire UA								Conversion of Grade II* 17-19 th C house, (adapted for use as a psychiatric hospital) removal of modern extensions; extensive new build in associated former parkland
Merchant's Quay	Gloucester CC								New-build on site of former dock-side warehouse; in Conservation Area and setting of several listed industrial buildings
Piercy Street and 'The Guts', New Islington	Manchester CC								Part of large-scale redevelopment of historic canal-side area with strong historic character. Few surviving assets
Alliance House student accommodation, Newington Green	London Borough of Hackney								Conversion of unlisted historic building, clearance of existing institutional buildings and erection of new student accommodation in backplot; in Conservation Area
'Summersfield', Papworth Everard	South Cambridgeshire DC								Expansion of historic village; within setting of historic village and adjacent to Conservation Area and listed buildings; demolition of buildings in CA to form access to site
'Tibby's Triangle', Southwold	Waveney DC								Redevelopment of former warehouse site in centre of historic town; in Conservation Area and setting of highly sensitive Grade I church
Weedon Hill Major Development Area, Aylesbury	Aylesbury Vale DC								Very large scale settlement expansion; directly adjacent to Scheduled medieval village, manorial site and putative Civil War artillery fortifications

3

Case studies

3 Case studies

3.1 This section of the report presents each of the 11 case study projects, setting out:

- Description and history of the site
- Description of the proposed development
- Historic environment context:
 - Character and significance of the surrounding historic environment
 - Heritage assets
 - Issues and opportunities
- Local policy and guidance framework:
 - Policy context
 - Guidance in place
- Planning process:
 - Summary of process
 - Assessment approach
 - Tools employed
 - Predicted impacts
- Outcomes:
 - Scheme quality
 - Relationship with the historic environment
 - Post-consent changes / issues
- Potential lessons

4 Axwell Park, Gateshead

Site details

Description

- 4.1 Situated on a promontory between the rivers Tyne and Derwent, the substantial designed landscape of Axwell Park forms an important part of the green corridor separating Gateshead's suburbs of Blaydon and Whickham. It provides an important link to the wider countryside and offers a strong contrast to the heavily developed and industrialised lower Tyne valley and the main communication corridor of the A1.
- 4.2 The main house – a large, three bay neoclassical mansion – is a presence in the wider landscape, particularly in elevated views from the south side of the Derwent Valley. It also features in views from more elevated sections of the A1.

History

- 4.3 The main house, built in 1758 in the Palladian style for Sir Thomas Clavering by James Paine, sits within extensive grounds and is accompanied by a later 'Gothick' dower house (1770-80), walled garden and relict picturesque designed landscape features, including an ornamental serpentine lake. Clavering, a prominent Tyneside industrialist and minerals magnate, had the house and park designed as a statement in the landscape – possibly in an attempt to compete with the Gibside estate at Rowlands Gill, further up the Derwent Valley⁷.
- 4.4 The estate remaining in the Clavering family, with alterations during the 19th century – including meticulous restoration in the 1880s. In the 1920s, the estate was broken up with the house passing to the 'Newcastle Ragged School' in 1925 and much of the grounds being released for housing development. The house became an approved school in the 1950s, and extensive alterations and additions to the house and buildings occurred through to the 1980s, in many cases adversely affecting the character and quality of the asset. (Of particular note is the highly intrusive former headmaster's house, immediately adjacent to Axwell House.)
- 4.5 Since educational use ceased at Axwell in the mid-1990s, further damage occurred to the house, ancillary structures and the designed landscape as a result of neglect, vandalism and the adverse effect of neighbouring housing development on the character of the site. These factors resulted in the Park being removed from the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in 2000. It was, however, added to Gateshead Council's local list of parks and gardens in 2003.
- 4.6 The Council had major concerns about the uncertain future and continued deterioration of the estate and had, on occasion, undertaken preservation works under Section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to arrest this decline. However, these interventions were relatively limited, resulting in the main house suffering from significant water ingress.
- 4.7 In order to secure a sustainable future for the assets, the Council put in place the 'Axwell Park Strategy' – informed by ongoing Conservation Area Character appraisal – to set the framework for conservation through development.
- 4.8 An application for restoration of the Hall, with the erection of some enabling development, was submitted in 1988, however an appropriate legal agreement could not be reached and the scheme was withdrawn.

⁷ Seat of coal baron and then local MP George Bowes; reputedly laid out by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown – but with little supporting evidence

Figure 4.1: Axwell Park, general images



Axwell Park Hall



Enabling development adjacent to walled garden



Unmanaged designed landscape features

Axwell Park Hall, designed landscape and enabling development, from south side of Derwent Valley



Historic environment context

Landscape

- 4.9 Axwell Park is one of a 'matched pair' of 18th century country estates – with Gibside – that plays a critical role in the landscape and historic character of the lower reaches of the Derwent Valley. It is an important 'gateway' feature, marking the transition from urban Tyneside to its more rural, pastoral hinterland and a key route into upland County Durham.
- 4.10 The designed landscape itself is thought to have been laid out at around the same time the house was constructed, although very little evidence on the subject is available. It reflects the principal views from the house and is designed to ensure intervisibility from much of the lower Derwent Valley. However, little original planting or indications of designed features remains, beyond the artificial serpentine lake, walled garden, bridge on the main access drive (listed individually at Grade II) and dovecot (also separate Grade II).

Character

- 4.11 Despite the effects of substantial alteration and insertion of modern buildings, the estate retains a strong and readily legible historic character. While the house itself is clearly Georgian, the contemporary nature of the designed landscape is rather less apparent as its picturesque features have been obscured through decades of under-management. Similarly, fragmentation of ownership through time has reduced some of the coherence in the wider landscape.
- 4.12 The insertion of modern housing, originally associated with the approved school, in close proximity to the main house significantly detracts from the principal elevation and substantially reduces the value of the upper terrace of the designed landscape.
- 4.13 The woodland and parkland between the house, walled garden and ornamental lake are subject to informal recreational use by local people. On the east side of the lake, sports pitches and parkland are maintained by the local authority.

Assets

- 4.14 Axwell Park Hall is an interesting example of a mid-18th century Palladian country house and is Grade II* Listed, along with its much-damaged surrounding balustrade and main steps. While the proportions and design of the house may lack the elegance of some of its contemporaries, this reveals some of the influence of the proprietor on the design, and the house's value as an expression of power in the landscape.
- 4.15 The unlisted walled garden – already heavily altered by the construction of Clavering House, part of the approved school, which was built on the site of the original conservatories – forms a key part of the development scheme.
- 4.16 The designed landscape, as noted above, has been neglected for a considerable period, with little positive management over a period of (presumably) decades. A range of inappropriate planting has occurred, with some natural regeneration of native species. Some features, such as the 19th century 'deer park' have been subject to extensive quarrying, and some outlying features – notably planted roundels in former parkland fields to the east – have been lost through agricultural use. The insertion of 'Axwell Park Road' and the 20th century housing off it, has served to sever much of the relationship between the upper designed landscape and the Dower House, situated at the head of the ornamental lake. The lake itself appears largely unmanaged and is heavily choked with silt and general detritus at its southwestern end.
- 4.17 The Grade II Listed bridge over the lake, affording access to the house, the remaining housing built to service the former approved school and separate residential developments around the former home farm, is also in a relatively poor state of repair.

Issues and opportunities

- 4.18 The house and its policies were, prior to development, in a very poor state of repair and the local authority had expended significant energy and resources on attracting appropriate interventions to secure its future. The requirements for conservation and enhancement were clearly

established by the strategy developed for the asset by the local authority, through the following priorities:

- Full restoration of Axwell Park Hall, together with its terraces and balustrade and of the listed bridge;
- Restoration of landscape in the immediate setting of the Hall;
- Restoration of the Parkland down to the Lake;
- Public access and nature conservation.

4.19 These priorities created a clear and comprehensive framework for appropriate development, including setting out the authority's positive approach to planning – but also stating their intention to explore compulsory purchase powers in relation to both land assembly and ultimate acquisition of the house should negotiation with owners fail to deliver conservation objectives.

4.20 It should be noted that the local authority and its partners have a long-standing interest in environmental enhancement in the Derwent Valley and has worked extensively with the National Trust and the Landmark Trust to secure and restore elements of the Gibside estate.

Local policy and guidance framework

Development plan

4.21 The restoration of the Hall and designed landscape were given special priority in Gateshead's Unitary Development Plan (UDP), and the Axwell Park Strategy was adopted as supplementary planning guidance. These policies have been carried through in the saved policies for the area, while the new Local Plan is in preparation, and therefore remain a local priority. (Policy ENV17 deals with Axwell Park individually, while Policy ENV19 covers locally listed parks and gardens in general.)

4.22 Regional Policy Guidance RPG1 (North East), which set out the spatial strategy for development in the north east of England, was also strongly supportive of regeneration specifically '*securing investment to improve the landscape*', '*supporting investment to ensure that the cultural heritage is properly conserved*' and '*supporting individual restoration projects to conserve and restore the region's...heritage as an integral part of its future development.*'

Associated guidance

4.23 A Character Statement for the Park was prepared in 1997, with the associated conservation strategy for the area having been adopted as Council policy in 1993. This information and guidance was refreshed as part of the UDP 'Re-deposit draft replacement plan' in 2006.

4.24 The Council's planning and conservation staff therefore had a longstanding interest in, and good understanding of, both the detail of the asset and its place in the wider historic environment. The strategy developed to guide appropriate development was very clear, but not overly prescriptive with regard to the means that would be considered appropriate in meeting the conservation objectives.

Planning process

Summary

4.25 Applications were submitted in 2005 by the developer (DARE (Northern) Ltd.) for:

- Conversion of the Hall to 23 apartments, demolition of later annex and erection of new-build neo-Georgian 'stable block' containing 18 houses and 9 apartments to the northwest of the main house [considered as enabling development by LPA]:
 - Altered by condition to omit proposed dormer above principal elevation
- Erection of 18 three-storey 'townhouses' overlooking the walled garden:

- Position of westernmost unit changed by condition to prevent incorporation of Walled Garden walls as building gable;
- Subsequently amended to change configuration of townhouse blocks

4.26 Extensive engagement between the developer and LPA was required to agree the principles of development, including the need for and viability of enabling development, conservation approach and the need for restoration of the historic landscape.

4.27 English Heritage was consulted, and provided advice with regard to architectural approaches and the need for enabling development. Concerns were raised in relation to the level of subdivision of the Hall and the need to retain principal staircases. EH, with the LPA, sought the advice of expert valuers on the developer's financial appraisal of the project and assurances that development phasing and the restoration of the Hall would be secured through an appropriate S106 obligation.

Approach to assessment and design

4.28 As required by the Axwell Hall Strategy, the developer was required to undertake a comprehensive range of studies to support the application including:

- Landscape appraisal and management plan;
- Full appraisal of the conservation deficit and the rationale for enabling development;
- Archaeological investigation of the site, specifically connected with the potential for pre-18th century buildings on site; and
- Standing building survey of the asset, and annex to be demolished.

4.29 Further studies were undertaken with regard to the presence of protected species (some of which have a bearing on potential landscape restoration works).

4.30 The Strategy set very clear expectations in terms of delivery against conservation objectives, particularly for the house. These were met by the proposed design and, as such, were considered acceptable by both the LPA and EH.

4.31 The two modern insertions followed very different design approaches. The 'stable block' being (albeit high quality) Georgian pastiche, recalling some of the detailing of the Hall and – although significantly larger in terms of footprint – remaining appropriately subservient to the Hall. Design of this enabling development was informed by the few existing historic photographs of the original subsidiary ranges in the same location. It successfully retained the estate vocabulary without seeking to exactly replicate a contemporary stable block (principally to accommodate the necessary numbers of units to produce the necessary financial returns).

4.32 Conversely, the townhouses overlooking the walled garden adopted an entirely modern design approach: restoring the garden walls and removing existing insertions to position four coaxial 'terraces' along the northern side of the garden. This element of the project, offering a far stronger visual contrast to the architectural language of the estate, was subject to a high degree of scrutiny to understand and limit its impacts. While the glazing-dominated design of this element of the development was ostensibly inspired by the estate's conservatories – originally located on this site – the extent to which this influence is visible in the design is minimal.

Tools employed

4.33 As noted above, the Axwell Hall Strategy, prepared by the LPA, provided the framework within which the development was designed.

4.34 The range of studies undertaken by the applicant on the historic buildings, the designed landscape and its current ecological and heritage values provided a strong evidence base and – as evidenced by the qualified support of the planning authority and English Heritage – produced a seemingly high quality scheme, at least on paper.

4.35 Although restoring the landscape to its 18th century design and condition was a priority, the presence of protected species (badgers and a regionally-important herony in an area of non-native conifer planting) influenced the development of the landscape plan. This was, however, informed by an extensive landscape analysis and historical/archaeological research and site work. It should be noted that several elements of the original estate and designed landscape (e.g. three

gate lodges, cascades, icehouse and ornamental temple) were not included in the restoration plans as they are in different ownerships – as are the Dower House, home farm complex and dovecot.

- 4.36 As EIA was not required for the development, a formal assessment of the potential impacts of the development is not provided in an integrated, coherent manner. Instead, separate aspects of predicted effects are distributed across the supporting documentation, particularly where requests for further information have been made (e.g. EH's request for assessment of effects of development on longer views of the estate and its landscape setting).

Predicted impacts

- 4.37 A significant proportion of the project is enabling development, which carries an inherent level of adverse impact on the assets involved. In this instance however, the character and integrity of both the conservation area and individual assets had already been subject to significant adverse effects as a consequence of a long history of institutional use and a series of inappropriate insertions and alterations. The proposed development - although introducing new large-scale elements to the estate – addressed many of these historic effects and sought to reinstate much of the estate's original character.
- 4.38 The new 'stable block' in particular is of a significant scale and, given its classical style and detailing, necessitated a highly detailed design approach and careful execution. On paper, this produced a respectful reinterpretation of a typical Georgian courtyard block, drawing on detailing from the Hall to create a convincing and coherent solution. While the block would represent a significant insertion within the setting of the Hall, its immediate environs are already compromised by the adjacent mid-century housing associated with the former institutional use of the Hall – and would also represent a significant improvement to the character of the conservation area over the previous, inappropriate, institutional buildings on site.
- 4.39 The walled garden 'terrace' of new housing represents a bold and significant insertion within an otherwise sensitive conservation area, particularly due to its height and visibility in the wider landscape. The relationships of the new-build elements to the restored walled garden appear to represent a slightly uncomfortable compromise, rendered acceptable by the fact that the garden (apart from around 60% of the external wall) required complete reconstruction that would have been otherwise unachievable.

Outcomes

Built scheme quality

- 4.40 The regeneration of Axwell Park and Hall appears to have been fraught with difficulty, meaning that the scheme as approved has not yet come to fruition and, on currently available information, there appears to be little prospect of this occurring in the foreseeable future.
- 4.41 The currently built elements of the project comprise:
- Restoration of the Hall, including demolition of later additions:
 - Extensive conservation and restoration of historic fabric, replacement of damaged masonry, roofing and glazing (including potentially over-zealous cleaning of intact fabric)
 - Proposed works do not appear to have been completed, particularly to the rear of the Hall
 - Extent of internal works could not be assessed.
 - The building has been 'mothballed' and does not appear to be subject to any ongoing works or monitoring.
 - Demolition of 'Clavering House' institutional building, restoration of walled gardens and erection of modern housing adjacent:
 - Conservation and restoration of garden walls have been completed to a high standard.
 - Internal layout of garden is generally as approved, with central fountain and structure planting in place.

- Block plan of new-build housing amended due to post-consent geotechnical investigations and likely need for significant cut-and-fill / foundation work. Amended 5-7-3-3 arrangement of units approved.
- Construction and finish of new units has proved substandard, with structural issues and improperly specified/installed steelwork and damp-proofing precipitating legal action by property owners against the developer.

Outcomes for the historic environment

- 4.42 Other than the restoration and planting of the walled garden, unfortunately no substantive work to the designed landscape appears to have occurred, potentially meaning that the developers are in breach of a number of planning conditions⁸. Bankruptcy of the original developer appears to have caused the project to stall, leaving a considerable proportion of the conservation deficit unaddressed and much of the public benefit, that rendered the scheme acceptable, unfulfilled.
- 4.43 While the Hall itself has been reasonably well conserved, and is undoubtedly in better condition, few of the priorities of the Axwell Hall Strategy have been delivered. Arguably, because of the stalling of the project, the planning blight experienced by neighbouring properties has not been substantially reduced. The Hall is now surrounded by 2.5m-high galvanised steel security fencing, with a number of 'Portacabins', construction debris and rubble, within consequent adverse effects on residential amenity and the setting of the asset.
- 4.44 It is unclear the extent to which enforcement action has been attempted by the LPA (no records appear on the LPA website), although it is acknowledged that this can be a significant challenge in the event of developer bankruptcy.



Figure 4.2: Listed bridge in poor condition

⁸ Although requested by both EH and the LPA case officer, no reference to a Section 106 obligation is made in the three decision notices relating to the house and enabling development, the walled garden or its subsequent variation. A draft agreement is appended to the Planning Statement that, if in force, should have provided a performance bond to secure the delivery of the consented landscape works



Figure 4.3: Enabling development, from the west

Post-consent changes / issues

- 4.45 Other than non-completion, the scheme has not been significantly altered post-consent. While the block layout of the walled garden was altered, this had no material effect on the impact of the development.
- 4.46 The basic pre-construction requirements of the planning conditions were fulfilled, but none of the subsequent provisions in relation to landscape restoration or management appear to have been delivered.

Potential lessons

- 4.47 Despite the post-consent difficulties the project has encountered, it must be noted that the Axwell Park Strategy prepared by the LPA and incorporated within both the UDP and the Conservation Area Character Statement had a very strong influence on the development proposals, securing acceptable development of and within the setting of a sensitive listed building and – at least on paper – significant conservation gain.
- 4.48 The key lesson provided by this case study is therefore the importance of post-consent monitoring, liaison with developers and, where necessary, prompt enforcement action. However high quality the design, comprehensive the assessment processes or well-drafted the planning conditions, without well-resourced and robust follow-up, conservation gains are potentially fragile.
- 4.49 The bankruptcy of the developer, and the subsequent inability to enforce against their successors in title (understood to be a separate company, but with the same directors), has resulted in a seriously compromised result and, arguably, very limited conservation gain. While the works to Hall have presumably ensured that it will remain weather-tight, a lack of finishings and ongoing maintenance will likely result in a resumption of deterioration in the medium term, particularly if issues of vandalism reoccur. The planning permissions for the development expired in 2010, and no subsequent applications to renew have come forward. It is understood that the owners of the

completed houses adjacent to the walled garden are pursuing the developer/their successors through a range of means to secure delivery against landscape enhancement and management commitments, but that this has proved fruitless to date.

5 'Accordia', Cambridge

Site details

Description

- 5.1 Located on the tip of a 'green wedge' between two arterial routes into Cambridge from the south, 'Accordia' sits in the heart of the city's leafy southern suburbs. The c.9ha site was formerly home to the Government Office for the East of England, housing a range of regional and agency functions in a series of mid-20th century low-rise prefabricated buildings and office blocks of varying vintages. On relocation of these functions to a new, purpose-built multi-storey office building to the south of the case study development, the site became available for comprehensive redevelopment.

History

- 5.2 The development site and its immediate environs, bounded by Brooklands Avenue to the north, originally formed part of the Brooklands Estate, laid out for local banker Richard Foster from around 1820 in what was then mainly open fields. His home, Brooklands House, was built around 1830 and is now Grade II Listed. To the north of the estate, land was acquired by Cambridge University for the development of the University Botanical Gardens, which opened in 1846. The proximity of the railway station, opened in 1845, also stimulated the development of significant areas of Victorian suburbs. In 1858, the estate was divided into plots and sold off, along with Brooklands Farm. However, the land immediately adjacent to Brooklands was retained by the Foster family and laid out as a deer park – partly to prevent further housing development encroaching on the privacy of Brooklands. This park remained intact until World War 2, when the land was requisitioned and offices constructed on the site. Despite this, much of the landscape structure established for the deer park – in the form of a copse of woodland and substantial avenues of trees perpendicular to Brooklands Avenue – survive and provide a grounding for the new development.
- 5.3 The site was identified as a priority for regeneration by the local authority (Cambridge City Council), in partnership with the incumbent government agencies, and was designated as such in the 1996 Cambridge Local Plan. An accompanying planning brief was prepared to set out the LPA's aspirations and requirements for new architecture on the site. The site was sold to the developer by the Government in 2003.

Historic environment context

- 5.4 The development is bounded on its west side by woodland lining Hobson's Conduit, a 17th century aqueduct built to bring fresh water into the centre of Cambridge from Nine Wells, a little to the north of Great Shelford. Sizeable Victorian villas line the north side of Brooklands Avenue, to the north of the development, and back onto the Botanic Gardens. On the eastern edge of the site, avenues of trees laid out as part of the estate's deer park survive and provide the setting for the Victoria square formed by Shaftesbury Road, Clarendon Road and Fitzwilliam Road. The character of the area is therefore squarely Victorian, suburban and affluent, with significant numbers of trees lining both Brooklands Avenue and the perpendicular streets. The site, at the time of the main planning process, was surrounded on three sides by the Brooklands Conservation Area.
- 5.5 The only tangible legacy of the site's post-war military and administrative functions is the presence of a very large, reinforced concrete bunker, Listed at Grade II, in the southwest corner of the site. Initially built as a 'War Room' in the early 1950s, a 'Regional Seat of Government' (RSG) structure was added in the early 1960s as part of a national plan to secure continuity of government in the event of nuclear conflict. Intended to house around 200 staff responsible for administration of 'Region 4' (the east of England) in the event of attack, the complex is a windowless, two-storey Brutalist-style block of imposing appearance but surprising design.

interest. It stands in marked contrast to the leafy backdrop of the woodland along Hobson's Conduit, and presented a significant challenge to the scheme's designers.

- 5.6 As one of only two purpose-built RSGs dating from this particularly intense period of the Cold War, the building was listed (Grade II) in 2003 in recognition of its historical importance.

Landscape

- 5.7 As noted above, the site lies at the tip of one of Cambridge's 'green wedges' that serve to define the pattern of development following the arterial routes into the city. The site itself and its immediate environs have a very strong historic landscape structure, created by the mature trees lining Brooklands Avenue and the relict designed landscape features that bisect and edge the development.

Character

- 5.8 The site and its surrounding have a strong suburban character, with the dominant Victorian architecture providing a valuable sense of time depth. Similarly, the wooded corridor of Hobson's Conduit – a well-known Cambridge landmark – gives a more rural aspect to the west of the site, as well as providing a physical and conceptual link to the city's earlier heritage.

Assets

- 5.9 The development was surrounded on three sides by the Brooklands Conservation Area, and had the potential to adversely affect the setting of Brooklands House (Grade II Listed). The substantial avenues of trees on the eastern edge of the site was included within the CA boundary and therefore benefitted from enhanced protection. Similarly, the trees bisecting the site made a substantial contribution to local character, and were a priority for preservation – along with individual specimen trees distributed throughout the site.
- 5.10 It was initially proposed that the then-unlisted RSG bunker would be entirely demolished as part of the development – a position with which the LPA agreed. The bunker was subsequently listed in 2003 and, as a result of EH objections the detailed application was called-in by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The ensuing public local inquiry determined that the building should be preserved in situ, despite there being no sustainable use in place going forward.

Issues and opportunities

- 5.11 The LPA were extremely clear, through their planning brief, that a scheme of exceptional quality was required for the site, as the 'flagship' housing allocation in the development plan. Their key objectives for the site were:
- To create a premier housing development;
 - To establish cohesiveness with the Cambridge context in general, the site's immediate surroundings and within the development itself;
 - To enable the creation of a mixed and long-term community on the site; and,
 - To build a viable development.
- 5.12 In addition, ensuring the sustainability of the development was a key consideration, reducing reliance on private car use, preserving and enhancing onsite and adjacent habitats and significantly improving the permeability of the site, connecting it to the city's access networks.
- 5.13 An interesting, and potentially challenging, design constraint was the presence of historical covenants – put in place by the National Freehold Land Society on their acquisition of part of the site in 1858 – specifying the type, position, use and minimum value of properties to be built. Taking these into account, the planning brief established a series of development principles within which proposals should be developed. These are discussed in more detail below.
- 5.14 Local attitudes and interests were also a strong potential constraint, with active community groups willing to engage with and, where necessary, oppose planning applications.

Figure 5.1: Accordia, general views



Local policy and guidance framework

Development plan

- 5.15 The site was allocated for housing development in the 1996 Cambridge City Local Plan, creating a supportive framework for development – but within the strict requirements of the accompanying planning brief for the site.
- 5.16 The Local Plan also had strong built heritage and conservation policies, reflecting Cambridge's extensive historic environment. For its time, the plan was also admirably focussed on sustainability, reflecting Cambridge's long association with cycling and the highly engaged nature of the local population. The plan, and the Brooklands planning brief, adhered to the five principles of sustainability agreed by Cambridge's 'Sustainable City Steering Group', namely:
- Social equity;
 - Participation;
 - The natural and built environment;
 - Environmental quality; and
 - Resource conservation.

Associated guidance

- 5.17 The Brooklands Avenue Planning Brief, prepared in support of the development plan, provided a comprehensive – but flexible – framework within which proposals could be designed.
- 5.18 It established the range of potential constraints (including heritage) acting on proposals and defined the LPA's requirements for masterplanning and architectural approaches. Local character was a key consideration, along with the relationship of the site to its wider context, tying the development in to building form, massing, height and palette of materials. As the sole major housing allocation in close proximity to the city centre, the LPA was clear in its aspiration for a development of urban – rather than suburban – density to deliver the necessary number, mix and quality of housing units. Consequently, the planning brief defined a series of detailed principles relating to [summarised for relevance]:
- **Overarching design principles:**
 - Development with the framework provided by the fine tree belts
 - An imaginative design to create a variety of interesting relationships between buildings, streets and open spaces
 - Relationship between new buildings and existing trees
 - Respect the setting of Brooklands House
 - **Built form:**
 - Perimeter blocks to create streets
 - A high degree of permeability to encourage walking
 - Active frontages to ensure surveillance at street level
 - A clear definition between public and private space...
 - Local distinctiveness, landmarks, views and vistas for legibility
 - Interesting rooflines and corner buildings for visual richness
 - Architectural detail and design at a human scale
 - Avoid dead frontages, parking courts and loose suburban layouts
 - **Residential:**
 - Density at an urban rather than suburban scale
 - Making efficient use of land to reduce car reliance and foster local facilities
 - Urban and tight residential form
 - Development of largely three storeys in height
 - Development of mostly terraced family housing...
 - Street design to avoid the need for car parks, garage courts and traffic calming
 - Social housing to comprise a mix of dwelling types

- Social housing to be integrated within the development
 - **Structural landscape and open space:**
 - Reinforce the green and wildlife corridors to the west of the site...
 - Space for informal recreation, social interaction and play...
 - Existing tree belts and planting along the Brook to form the structure for open space...
 - Linear open space containing cycle route and footpath with substantial buffer to wildlife corridor
 - Retain visual barrier with Finches Walk
- 5.19 To further guide development, the planning brief contained an outline masterplan setting out development character areas, drawing on existing structure and relationships with neighbouring development to define appropriate approaches. A key function of this approach was to safeguard the setting of Brooklands House through the provision of suitable open space to ensure the house retained its identity and legibility.
- 5.20 The brief also set out information requirements in support of planning applications, including a statement that EIA would be required and should include, inter alia:
- Archaeological assessment
 - Plans for the retention/conversion of the RSG bunker or demolition method statement, plus assessment of the impact of demolition.
- 5.21 It should be noted that, at this point, the RSG bunker was neither Listed nor within the Brooklands Conservation Area.

Planning process

Summary

- 5.22 The LPA worked very closely with the developers in defining the information requirements to accompany the outline planning application for the site. From the outset, their high standards with regard to the expected quality of architecture and masterplanning were clear. Ultimately, this influenced the developer's appointment of a well-respected practice with a strong grounding in conservation as well as high quality housing design to lead the process. In turn, Feilden Clegg Bradley, leading on the masterplanning and project management, appointed two additional practices – Alison Brooks Architects and McCreanor Lavington – to design key parts of the site to ensure a variety of approaches and responses
- 5.23 A highly proactive – and arguably risky – approach was employed where the outline approval (issued in 2000) only set the requirements for dwelling numbers and access requirements, with the developers, architects and masterplanners working closely with the LPA to agree details. Throughout, the planning brief formed the basis for the design process and engagement over the following three years, setting the LPA's 'shopping list' of criteria. Numerous subsequent 'reserved matters' applications were submitted and, subject to extensive consultation, approved. Engagement with English Heritage on approaches to preserving the setting and adjacent landscape features of Brooklands House (by this stage, EH's East of England office) delivered a satisfactory solution. Conversely, while the LPA were minded to grant consent for demolition of the bunker EH objected, triggering call-in and a public inquiry. Ultimately, the Secretary of State ruled that the asset should be preserved in-situ. (A subsequent application for change of use and conversion to a document and data storage facility was approved in 2006 – although no progress appears to have been made on the ground.)

Approach to assessment and design

- 5.24 An Environmental Statement was produced to accompany the outline application. However, this focussed principally on the likely impact of 300+ dwellings on site, and the associated transport effects of both construction and occupation. While an archaeological assessment was conducted, detailed consideration of the likely effects on wider built heritage was not provided. At this stage, a consultation response from CABE set out significant concerns with regard to a lack of consideration of sense of place and the coherence of the indicative architectural language

employed. This appears to have been instrumental in shaping the developer's approach to securing high quality design.

- 5.25 The proactive planning method subsequently adopted by the LPA meant that the design team was able to employ a [comparatively] collaborative approach to masterplanning and detailed design. Working within the strong framework provided by the planning brief, and the restrictions imposed on the northern portion of the site by the covenants, Feilden Clegg Bradley developed a masterplan that addressed the key concerns and requirements of the LPA and a wide range of consultees. The 'living in a garden' concept, developed with their landscape consultants, used the pre-existing landscape structure to produce a deceptively simple hierarchical grid of streets, populated mainly with perimeter blocks and containing a strong network of public open space, presaging the current green infrastructure approach. This delivers a very high proportion of open space (3.9ha out of 9.6ha / c.40%) in what appears, at least on plan, to be a very dense development.
- 5.26 The design team's approach to detail, while employing strictly modern forms, drew extensively on Cambridge's local palette of styles, materials and urban form. This was judged to be very effective in meeting the LPA's requirements and ensuring that an unashamedly modern development could be accommodated in a relatively sensitive context.
- 5.27 The approach to assessment was highly labour-intensive, particularly on the part of the LPA – however, for such a high-profile site the inputs were justified⁹.

Tools employed

- 5.28 The main tool employed by the designers was a very strong understanding of local context and character. Creating a distinctively 'Cambridge' identity, as well as a strong individual sense of place, was a key objective. The grid pattern of streets imposed by the existing avenues of trees and adjacent streets, provided a ready-made framework within which a hierarchy of side streets off the 'Aberdeen Avenue' spine route could be constructed.
- 5.29 The need to create a functional place that interacted effectively with its surroundings on both an architectural and social level was a critical requirement, and vigorous feedback from community and interest groups undoubtedly influenced efforts to improve permeability. Similarly, feedback from the Cambridge Design and Conservation Panel, English Heritage, local housing associations and the Cambridge Disability Panel played a visible role in shaping design solutions.
- 5.30 Material choice was particularly important in rooting the building within its context. Distinctive Cambridge buff stock bricks dominate the development, with other more subtle choices – such as pre-patented copper roofing – drawing on nearby Victorian and Edwardian villa architecture.

Predicted impacts

- 5.31 It was largely considered that adverse effects on the setting of Brooklands House had been designed out, particularly given the relatively unattractive office buildings that had occupied the site prior to clearance. Similarly, negotiated solutions were reached with regard to the need to drive new pedestrian entrances through the listed boundary wall.
- 5.32 Demolition and replacement of the former office buildings with new, high quality housing was generally considered to improve the setting of the Brooklands Conservation Area, particularly with regard to the frontages on to Brooklands Avenue and Shaftesbury Road.
- 5.33 While demolition of the bunker was considered acceptable (if not desirable) by both the developer and the LPA, neither assessment was based on an appropriate understanding of the asset's heritage values or significance.

⁹ It is, however, difficult to imagine a similar approach being sustainable in the current climate of financial constraint on LPAs.

Outcomes

Built scheme quality

- 5.34 Overall, Accordia is a very high quality scheme – reflected in the number of awards it has accrued, culminating in the 2008 RIBA Stirling Prize. It remains the only large-scale housing development ever to have won this flagship award.
- 5.35 It is undoubtedly a successful place that pays appropriate respect to its surroundings but seeks to establish its own identity. It is immediately recognisable and has, arguably, set a new standard for housing-led regeneration projects. There are, however, some elements that are less successful, without fatally compromising the scheme.
- 5.36 While the grid street pattern helps to establish a level of legibility for pedestrians, the layout is compromised by the fact that there are actually no through connections in the development. It is effectively a very large, neatly sub-divided cul-de-sac. This inevitably compromises some of the potential vitality of the scheme, making it feel less 'alive' than an equivalent historic neighbourhood. In particular, the scheme is almost entirely divorced from the new office complex to the south, meaning that the few public amenities (i.e. the one small shop) that could be used by workers is somewhat neglected. Similarly, the lack of physical connection to Shaftesbury Road serves to divorce the new architecture from its context, rather than helping it integrate.
- 5.37 While not directly connected to interactions with heritage, the affordable family homes to the south of the site are noticeably lower design quality, particularly in relation to materials. They also have to contend with the overgrown and graffiti-adorned bunker structure which, although acknowledged in their mono-pitched roofs, is a brooding presence at the east end of Gilpin Road surrounded as it is with temporary security fencing. The closest house is less than 3m from the bunker and was clearly designed with its eventual demolition in mind – it is otherwise somewhat unsatisfactory.



Figure 5.2: RSG bunker

Outcomes for the historic environment

- 5.38 In general, the scheme is very respectful of its immediate and local context in terms of the key qualities of the Conservation Area and its relationship to Brooklands House. The setting of Brooklands is preserved by the inclusion of a significant area of public open space adjacent, limiting the effect on views from the principal rooms – albeit that they still terminate in a four and a half-storey block of flats.
- 5.39 Its articulation with Brooklands Avenue and the reinterpretation of Victorian villa architecture, within the bounds of the covenants imposed in the mid-19th century, is particularly successful.

Overall the scheme is weathering well, with untreated timbers weathering down to an attractive silver finish in exposed locations. The dominant stock brick surfaces now chime well with the surroundings and have relatively few areas of moss / algae growth. Other, more modern, finishes such as gabion baskets and COR-TEN steel are faring equally well.

- 5.40 The bunker remains the thorn in the side of an otherwise successful project, both in terms of outcomes for its long term future and with regard to its clearly adverse effect on the quality and character of the area. While a new use has been approved, field visits indicated that no progress had been made. Fortunately, it is an inherently robust and very well sealed structure and, despite being overgrown in places, does not appear to be deteriorating rapidly. Whatever its eventual use, the very limited vehicular connectivity imposed by Accordia's layout – and local aversion to through traffic – is likely to be a critical constraint on positive reuse.

Post-consent changes / issues

- 5.41 While some internal changes to individual dwellings and blocks occurred post-detailed consent, very little change has occurred within the development footprint – indeed, there has been significant local action to prevent the evolution of the area. In 2012, in response to pressure from residents, Cambridge City Council consulted on expanding the Brooklands Conservation Area to cover the entire development area, and adopted the extension in June 2013. Enforcement action has already been taken against residents (for example, for roofing garden terraces and enclosing carparks in the mews-style portions of the development).

Potential lessons

- 5.42 The principal lesson provided by Accordia is the critical advantage that a proactive and collaborative approach by developers, designers and planning authority alike can have. While the detailed design quality is obviously a product of employing highly skilled and renowned architects, much credit should be afforded to the planning authority for developing – and sticking to – a robust set of design principles, as set out in the site planning brief, and an unwavering commitment to quality. Their recognition that, although sensitive, the site had capacity for a bold higher density scheme is much to their credit, as is the fact that they ensured that appropriate policy support and guidance were in place long before any schemes came forward. This was instrumental in ensuring they could play a leading role in the process, rather than being forced into the stereotypical reactive role.
- 5.43 Clearly, the temporal context of the development had a major influence on its success, in that it was conceived, designed and was on site well before the worst effects of the economic crisis hit the UK housing market. Similarly, its location in one of the UK's most desirable cities, with a professional population at least partly insulated from the worst excesses of recession, ensured that the developer had no difficulty with lack of demand for open market units.
- 5.44 With regard to effects on heritage, the scheme presents a salutary lesson in ensuring that decisions relating to assets are made in the light of a full understanding of their heritage values and significance. The scheme, and particularly the affordable elements adjacent to the bunker, is unnecessarily compromised by a failure to consider options for the asset's future – beyond the hoped-for demolition. While the asset has been 'saved', any future use is likely to be seriously compromised by the fact that it is virtually inaccessible to anything but very light traffic, as it is now located on the corner of two quiet residential streets. Given previous patterns of community action, it is likely that any use generating increased traffic would be subject to significant objection – particularly as traffic would have to pass through areas of 'shared space', passing playgrounds and communal open spaces.

6 Bellrope Meadow, Thaxted

Site details

Description

- 6.1 Thaxted is a small, historic rural settlement in north Essex, approximately 8km directly north east of Stansted Airport. With pre-Conquest roots, the settlement is named in the Domesday Book and has a wealth of historic buildings dating from the 14th century onwards.
- 6.2 Bellrope Meadow is located on the northern edge of the settlement and was a greenfield site, its boundaries – preserving the relict pre-Improvement field pattern – lined with mature trees and containing a small area of woodland.
- 6.3 The development comprises 30 houses with 'homeworking units' arranged in a cul-de-sac around a sinuous spine road.

History

- 6.4 A number of applications relating to the 1.4-hectare rectangular-plan site were made from the 1970s onwards, initially for industrial development and then for residential development. Work began on access to an approved industrial development in 1990. However, there was a lack of interest in the site for industrial purposes, and it was sold a number of times.
- 6.5 In October 1999 an outline application for 18 working dwellings and workshops, four B1 industrial units and a communications centre was granted on appeal, and this in turn was amended to 30 work-at-home units in February 2006. The adopted Uttlesford Local Plan (2005) identified the site as a key employment area within the settlement boundary of Thaxted. The detailed designs were approved in September 2006. A Section 109 Agreement made provision for education and affordable housing purposes.
- 6.6 An adjoining 11-hectare greenfield site to the east was approved for development with 60 dwellings in February 2013.

Historic environment context

- 6.7 There are no direct heritage designations affecting the site. However, the previously undeveloped site is located in a prominent location on the northern edge of the town, and is visible in long views to the town from one of the main approaches (B1051, Sampford Road) and across the countryside from the north and east. Archaeological investigation of the site in 2007 and 2008 revealed evidence of Late Iron Age and Roman occupation, including the remains of a cemetery (Essex Historic Environment Record).

Landscape

- 6.8 The landscape of the Thaxted area is, broadly, an undulating boulder clay plateau with a strongly agricultural character. The town is located on the eastern slopes of the Chelmer Valley, and the northern and south eastern parts of the settlement are located on relatively high ground. From elevated areas to the north, extensive views are available of Thaxted, notably of St John's Church (with the only medieval stone spire in Essex) and John Webb's windmill, to the west of the town.

Character

- 6.9 Thaxted is frequently described as one of the finest examples of a small market town in the East of England, and Nikolaus Pevsner's comments about the town are often quoted: *'the town as a whole is very perfect, chiefly because there is truly not one house in it that would appear violently out of place. All is in scale, nothing too high or too ostentatious, mostly white, cream, pink plastering or exposed timber framing'*.

- 6.10 Key characteristics of the town are its compact form and its green setting in an undulating agricultural landscape. John Webb's Windmill (1804) and the 55m-tall medieval St John's Parish Church spire are landmark features in views to the town from the surrounding countryside. The historic town centre is a dense nucleated settlement with elements dating from the fourteenth century and significant numbers of buildings surviving from the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
- 6.11 Approximately 43% of the town is included in the conservation area. Some twentieth century expansion took place on the north-eastern side of the town, but on a relatively modest scale, and, with the exception of the ribbon development of Bardfield Road, in a compact form attached to the historic core.

Assets

- 6.12 No designated assets are located on site. However, the scheme does have an adverse effect on views of the town, and Conservation Area, from the north. The northern periphery of the town has a strong historic character, created by narrow roads often lined with tall, species-rich hedges.
- 6.13 The remains uncovered during archaeological work in advance of development were not of such significance or sensitivity to require preservation in-site, and impacts were not of a magnitude to require large-scale excavation.

Issues and opportunities

- 6.14 The settlement edge site, and a general lack of connectivity to the heart of the village, presented a challenge to any housing development on site – potentially reflecting the fact that the planning authority never truly intended it as a suitable location for housing land.
- 6.15 The site lies squarely within long views of Thaxted's historic core from higher ground to the north, making fitting development into this view a particular challenge.

Local policy and guidance framework

Development plan

- 6.16 As a rural settlement, Thaxted has a longstanding need for sources of employment to maintain community vitality and reduce the need for long-distance commuting. Consequently, the Bellrope Meadow site was promoted as employment land in the Uttlesford District Local Plan 1995 and, crucially, included within the settlement boundary. The 1999 appeal decision, granting permission for home-working units with housing, therefore approved the principle of development – despite its being in conflict with the development plan.

Associated guidance

- 6.17 At the time of the initial grant of outline planning permission in 1999 and the approval of detailed designs in 2006, neither the Thaxted Design Statement (2010) nor the Thaxted Conservation Area Appraisal and Management proposals (2012) were in place. These adopted documents now form material considerations in the planning system. The background paper for the new Local Plan, *Thaxted Historic Settlement Character Assessment* (2009), was also produced after the grant of permission for the study site, but before approval of the adjoining Sampford Road site.
- 6.18 However, drafts of the Landscape Character Assessment, which deal with the strategic historic environment constraints in the area, were available and could have assisted in the development of more sensitive development (particularly in relation to visibility).

Figure 6.1: Bellrope Meadow, general images



Bellrope Meadow, looking east on Samford Road



Thaxted, and Bellrope Meadow, from the north



Bellrope Meadow. 'Work at home' units in black weatherboard.

Planning process

Summary

- 6.19 Residential use of the site has been achieved by persistent developer pressure over a number of decades and applications. From the publicly available documents it appears that very little, if any, attention was focussed on strategic design issues and the visual impacts on the wider setting of the town. In many ways, the LPA's hands were tied at the strategic level by the 1999 decision.

Approach to assessment and design

- 6.20 The initial grant of planning permission on appeal in 1999 pre-dated the guidance in the Essex Design Manual (2005) and Thaxted-specific guidance on design aspects, such as the Thaxted Historic Settlement Character Assessment (2009) and Thaxted Design Statement (2010), although PPG15 was in place.
- 6.21 PPG15 (1994) states that, '*The desirability of preserving or enhancing the area should also, in the Secretary of State's view, be a material consideration in the planning authority's handling of development proposals which are outside the Conservation Area but would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area*'. However, these considerations did not enter into the Inspector's decision in 1999, despite the LPA's concerns with regard to visual intrusion.
- 6.22 Although the 1999 permission was for 22 units (four to Sampford Road, and 18 behind), the 2003 outline application was for 30 houses and associated, separate, home working units. Here, the LPA could have asserted some control on the grounds of significant over-development – in addition to increasing the magnitude of change within views to the Conservation Area – but no such concerns were raised.

Predicted impacts

- 6.23 Broadly, the potential for impacts on the setting of the town in general, and the Conservation Area in particular, do not appear to have been afforded any significant level of assessment.
- 6.24 The local authority's own assessment of the potential impact of development to the north-east of the town, set out in the Thaxted Historic Settlement Character Assessment (2009 p.9) could well apply to the scheme: '*Development to the south of Sampford Road would have detrimental impacts on views of the church spire, the dominant landmark building in Thaxted, thus diminishing the sense of place and local distinctiveness in this location*'. However, construction is currently underway on a larger residential scheme with similar impacts, immediately to the east of the site. The cumulative effects of this development remains to be seen – although this is potentially disheartening given the information sources that are now available and should ideally influence development proposals.

Outcomes

Built scheme quality

- 6.25 The Bellrope Meadow design adopts some traditional forms and features of the area including hipped and gabled tiled roofs, red brick and rendered walls and brick chimneys. The six different house types are of 1½, 2 or 2½ storeys, and the roofing materials vary between machine-made red clay and artificial slate. 22 houses are detached, 6 are terraced (fronting Sampford Road) and 2 are semi-detached. Directly in front of the 3-, 4- and 5-bedroom houses are the separate 1-, 1½- or 2 storey work-at-home units, which are clad in black stained weatherboarding to give the impression of rural barn-like structures. The development is laid out as a winding cul-de-sac with all the units facing inwards. A pedestrian link to the adjoining playing field forms the only direct connection into the town. The entrance to the development faces north, away from the town, and opens onto the rural B1051. Existing hedge planting was retained on the boundaries, which are dense on the west, but patchy on the east where the development currently meets the adjoining agricultural landscape.

- 6.26 While the applicant's 2006 planning statement and architectural design statement make much of the environmental benefits of home-working, they make no mention of place-making and the wider visual impacts of the development on this important historic town.

Outcomes for the historic environment

- 6.27 Where previously, high quality views to the town from the north-east were almost entirely rural, with only the distinctive spire and windmill sails of the historic town breaking above the trees and hedgerows, now a dense suburban development of executive homes and large garage/workspace units sprawls out into the countryside at Bellrope Meadow. In spite of the attempts to reference local features and materials, the disconnected, insular and inward-looking cul-de-sac layout, the density of the development and its hard built edges on the rural fringe of the town, the tightly packed distribution of large houses and individual work-at-home units, minimal integral greenspace, and weak screening by planting on the eastern boundary, all contribute to a development that lacks sensitivity to place and the broader landscape surroundings of an exceptional historic town.
- 6.28 It is interesting to note that the design and access statement for the adjoining development site identifies some – but by no means all – of the shortcomings of the Bellrope Meadow scheme, and attempts to mitigate them in the design and landscaping of that project.

Post-consent changes / issues

- 6.29 No significant change post-detailed consent has occurred.



Figure 6.2: Vernacular styles, inappropriately applied? Examples of weatherboarding in vernacular buildings in Thaxted, left; over-use of style in Bellrope Meadow, right.

Potential lessons

- 6.30 In many respects, it would be convenient to dismiss Bellrope Meadow as a consequence of an aberrant appeal decision which placed too much weight on the applicant's vision of home-working as a panacea for unsustainable commuting. Unfortunately, the impacts identified for this development are being, to all intents and purposes, replicated in the adjacent field¹⁰ despite the availability of a substantial evidence base and a more robust policy framework. Similarly, the historic environment advice provided to the LPA related solely to the potential for buried archaeological remains and offered no comment on built heritage or setting issues.
- 6.31 Despite its unsatisfactory outcomes, this case study presents some interesting issues.
- 6.32 Firstly, the potential damage that can be wrought by the continual updating and minor alterations of planning permissions that would not generally be considered acceptable. While the specifics of the case are likely to be relatively rare, as home-working units will most likely be proposed in areas allocated for housing or mixed use development, the appeal decision possibly creates an unhelpful precedent (albeit against a now-obsolete policy framework). Locally, it has clearly created a precedent for residential development along Sampford Road, despite the LPA's own Historic Settlement Character Assessment indicating strongly against it.
- 6.33 Secondly, it clearly illustrates a major gap in the LPA's consideration of the historic environment in its wider sense, including the role of setting in contributing to the character and significance of conservation areas¹¹. This is underlined by the fact that the field to the east of Bellrope Meadow (around a third of which is now being developed for housing) is proposed as housing land in the consultation draft Uttlesford Local Plan (June 2012). This is particularly concerning, given the production of characterisation work as part of the evidence base for the emerging local plan.
- 6.34 What lessons can be taken from this are less clear. However, it seems apparent that the benefits of more holistic approaches to the historic environment – embodied by the characterisation studies already in place – have not been effectively transposed to either policy or decision-making. This represents a challenge for the LPA, particularly as the causes of this disconnect are not readily apparent.

¹⁰ Planning permission granted in November 2012 for 60 houses and associated landscaping

¹¹ No consideration is given to setting of conservation areas in the draft Local Plan (2012)

7 Graylingwell Hospital, Chichester

Site details

Description

- 7.1 The 36-hectare peri-urban brownfield site lies 1.5km to the north of Chichester city centre on the lands of the former West Sussex County Lunatic Asylum (latterly known as Graylingwell Hospital). The hospital remained in use until 2001. It was acquired from the NHS by the national regeneration agency, English Partnerships (now the Homes and Communities Agency) in 2007.
- 7.2 The scheme involves the retention and conversion of numerous locally important historic buildings, extensive demolition and large-scale new-build development.

History

- 7.3 The site was allocated for residential development, with scope for some mixed-uses, in the 2006 North East Chichester Development Brief Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Following a competition, English Partnerships selected a joint-venture company, between a private developer and a housing association, to take a building lease and deliver the project.

Historic environment context

- 7.4 Much of the site is designated as a Conservation Area and is included on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. It contains two Grade II listed buildings (Summerdale Farmhouse and the Chapel), a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Chichester Dyke), and 472 protected trees. There are views from part of the site to the spire of Chichester Cathedral.
- 7.5 In 1894 Sir Arthur Blomfield's architectural practice designed the red brick asylum buildings in Queen Anne style to an 'echelon-plan', in which the ward pavilions were laid out in the shape of a compact arrowhead around the administrative, social and core service buildings. Corridors linked the wards, and each pavilion was intended to be occupied by a different medical class of patient, including the sick and infirm, short-term and chronic, and epileptic. 'Airing courts' for exercise and recreation were arranged adjacent to the wards and enclosed with holly bushes. The western buildings were devoted to the treatment of male patients, whilst the eastern wards were for females. A large, keep-like watertower formed a landmark building within the complex.
- 7.6 The noted designer of asylum grounds, Robert Lloyd, laid out the surrounding gardens and roads, retaining Havenstoke Field as open parkland around the Iron Age Chichester Dyke. To the north-east, the existing agricultural land of Graylingwell Farm was retained for continued working by the male patients. The hospital grounds benefited from a wide range of specimen trees donated by the Batsford Estate in the 1890s and at the start of the twentieth century. Two further wards were added in 1900-1, and several peripheral buildings followed in the 1920s and '30s.

Landscape

- 7.7 The site is situated in extensive parkland, somewhat removed from the suburbs to the north and Chichester Hospital to the south. To the east, the site is bordered by open fields of the Lavant floodplain and the historic Goodwood motor racing circuit beyond. Views of and from the site are therefore an important consideration.

Character

- 7.8 The character of the site itself is recognisably institutional, with numerous imposing red-brick Queen Anne-style ranges and vaguely Italianate water tower a frequent landmark. Unlike many contemporary asylum complexes, the warm palette of familiar, almost domestic materials and less severe style (cf. earlier Gothick examples) help to defuse what could be an overwhelming

location. Similarly, although the designed landscape has been managed in a relatively utilitarian fashion, it provides a high quality and appropriate setting for the development.

Assets

- 7.9 The site contains a huge number of individual assets, both designated and not, ranging from the Scheduled Iron Age Chichester Dyke system, bisecting the parkland to the west of the main hospital, to the 20+ buildings forming the hospital wards, staff accommodation, chapel, farm and outlying ancillary structures. The parkland itself is on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, at Grade II. Graylingwell Farm is noted as a special area, with strong pre-hospital associations with Anna Sewell, the author of 'Black Beauty.'
- 7.10 The development proposed stripping back the majority of the later additions to the institutional landscape, leaving the fine echelon plan hospital wings and central administrative buildings as the canvas for redevelopment. The main historic building to be demolished was the hospital recreation hall/theatre, generating a degree of controversy.

Issues and opportunities

- 7.11 The site is both very large and highly complex, necessitating a selective approach to conservation to secure a sustainable and workable solution. Because of this complexity, a comprehensive understanding of the assets' value, significance and contribution to character is essential to the ability to make informed decisions and develop a strategic approach to the site.
- 7.12 The large institutional buildings present a challenge to convert, given the often large room size, ceiling heights and fenestration that can be an impediment to effective, sensitive subdivision. The need to accommodate new-build elements within the landscape also creates significant challenges with regard to view management, especially with regard to key internal visual relationships (e.g. with the water tower and chapel), and views out towards the Goodwood estate to the east.
- 7.13 A key opportunity lay in the largely single-phase nature of the principal buildings of historic interest. This meant that identifying the key elements of the hospital, and excising lower quality or less significant additions, was a relatively straightforward process and could be easily discussed and agreed with stakeholders without the need for conjecture or speculative approaches to conservation.
- 7.14 The nature of the development, led as it was by English Partnerships/Homes and Communities Agency, was a major opportunity in itself to deliver an exemplar project that met key sustainability aspirations as well as delivering outcomes that conserved and enhanced the character and significance of the numerous heritage assets on site.

Local policy and guidance framework

Development plan

- 7.15 The relevant development plan for the proposed development consisted of saved policies from the West Sussex Structure Plan 2004 and the Chichester District Local Plan 1999 respectively. Graylingwell was allocated for residential development, with some mixed use, in the North East Chichester Development Brief SPD (2006 – although this document was never formally adopted due to issues related to evidence-gathering for the then-emerging Local Development Framework).

Associated guidance

- 7.16 Some additional guidance with regard to the potential landscape and visual impact of development was provided by 'The Future Growth of Chichester: landscape and visual considerations' (LUC, 2005).

Figure 7.1: Graylingwell, general views



Graylingwell Hospital administration block, with new build elements



Water tower, converted to development's district heating power plant



New build, taking materials and scaling from historic buildings adjacent

Planning process

Summary

- 7.17 In 2005, a large portfolio of redundant hospital sites, including Graylingwell, was transferred to English Partnerships under an agreement between the Department of Health and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Following a competition, English Partnerships selected a joint-venture company between a private developer and a housing association to take a building lease and deliver the project.
- 7.18 Operating at the strategic level, there was significant cooperation between agencies, with English Heritage engaging with the process from the outset to provide advice and guidance on managing heritage interests.
- 7.19 An outline application was submitted in 2008, with numerous subsequent reserved matters applications and additional detailed applications supported by, inter alia, an environmental statement, design & access statement, landscape & visual impact assessment, historic building appraisal, archaeological appraisal, heritage statement and a historic landscape appraisal.

Approach to assessment and design

- 7.20 The approach adopted by the developers is described as 'sustainable urbanism', based on four key drivers: collaborative planning; working with the past; carbon neutral placemaking; and seeding community (engendering a sense of community through design, provision of facilities and a cultural strategy). A community development trust has been established to manage the community buildings and to lead on supporting the emerging sustainable community.
- 7.21 Graylingwell is the largest carbon neutral development in the UK. The scheme has secured a number of awards:
- RTPI Planning Awards (South East) 2010: Community Engagement Award
 - Sustainable Housing Awards 2010: Sustainable Larger Social Housing Project of the Year
 - The Housebuilder Awards 2010: Best Low or Zero Carbon Initiative
- 7.22 Given the flagship nature of the project, and the extensive involvement of agency partners, a very comprehensive approach to understanding the site and using this evidence base to shape design has been employed.
- 7.23 As explained in more detail below, Graylingwell was a pilot partnership project between English Partnerships and English Heritage, trialling the site-specific application of Historic Landscape Characterisation techniques to provide planning and design teams with a contextual understanding of the site's historical development and key areas of character and significance that can inform strategies for redevelopment.

Tools employed

- 7.24 The early development of a Historic Landscape Characterisation by English Heritage and English Partnerships appears to have played an important positive role in the subsequent masterplanning process.
- 7.25 The characterisation divided the site into character areas and identified constraints, opportunities and ways in which the heritage assets could contribute to the scheme. The characterisation informed the tender process for the developer selection and was a key document in the masterplanning exercise. The masterplan itself emerged out of a high level of consultation with local stakeholders. More detailed planning approaches, such as the Historic Landscape Appraisal of 2008, also took significant account of the characterisation document in arriving at an assessment of the significance of the landscape elements.
- 7.26 The masterplan includes a number of heritage provisions and recommendations derived from the characterisation study: protection of the scheduled Chichester Dyke and parkland setting through the retention of Havenstoke Field as an amenity space; retention, maintenance and strengthening of the mature planting throughout the site in recognition of the conservation area and registered

park and garden status; conservation of the listed chapel and farmhouse; and repair and re-use of a number of non-listed structures in the main hospital complex.

Predicted impacts

- 7.27 The assessment of predicted environmental effects for the development was very comprehensive and was informed by a well-researched and compiled baseline. Significance of individual assets and internal character areas was clearly defined and used to justify decisions on retention or demolition. Where demolition of buildings of 'medium' significance was proposed (i.e. the recreation hall/theatre, Stockman's Cottage and the Isolation Unit/Sandown House), justification was provided in a separate Heritage Statement. Demolition of these assets was held to be for the greater good of the scheme as a whole, a position that both the LPA and English Heritage accepted¹².

Outcomes

Built scheme quality

- 7.28 The resulting development scheme is in progress, but it is already clear that the concepts of character areas and mixing housing types throughout the site are working well. Apart from the retained open green space at Havenstoke Field, the first character zone to be completed is Lloyd Road, which wraps around the west and north of the retained NHS buildings (the Harold Kidd Unit and Pinewood House). This is largely of new-build carbon neutral 2-storey terraced houses. Work is underway on the main hospital zone.
- 7.29 The old watertower has been converted to a green energy centre. It maintains its position as a landmark building on the eastern edge of the city and within the Graylingwell Conservation Area, but with carefully designed additions has a new and useful economic purpose as a district heating and power centre. The administrative building and the former Medical Officer's House, the main focus of the original architectural effort on the axis of the hospital plan, have been retained and converted, along with the arc of plainer pavilion wards, but the centre of the site has been cleared of former hospital buildings for new-build terraces of townhouses and apartment blocks. The new buildings are of a variety of designs in contemporary styles and materials, but detailed with red brick panels that root them in the traditional materials of the old hospital buildings.
- 7.30 The footpath network reflects the sites of the removed corridor links between the old pavilions, and some of the old airing courts will be reinstated as communal gardens. As in the original layout, the core area is densely built, with green spaces pushed to the outside of the pavilion arc. The principal characteristic of the original asylum, its symmetrical echelon pavilion layout, remains legible, whilst the new buildings are carefully interwoven on a similarly symmetrical layout to provide a variety of dwelling types.

Outcomes for the historic environment

- 7.31 Across the site, the overall outcome for the historic environment has been good for both individual assets and the character and significance of the place as a whole. Conservation interventions are of a high standard and the relationship between historic fabric and new-build elements of the scheme is generally good, with visual and functional relationships preserved in key areas.
- 7.32 The site has been densely redeveloped, particularly in the 'core' area – although this is arguably a direct response to the previous pattern of development. However, the main original architectural moves on site – notably the relationship on the principal axis between the Medical Officer's house and the administration building – remain clearly legible and retain their place in the development hierarchy.

¹² In the case of the recreation hall/theatre, difficulties in conversion and a limited contribution to the character of the conservation area was acknowledged in the EH characterisation study, along with the probable need to consider demolition to facilitate the redevelopment of the site as a whole.

- 7.33 Overall the Graylingwell Hospital redevelopment appears to be achieving the delicate balance between retaining some of the institutional character of a former hospital and providing an attractive environment for contemporary living in an environmentally sustainable manner. Early characterisation of the site and the commitment of the landowners, developers and their agents to high standards of design and sensitivity to the values of the heritage assets and their settings, along with significant community engagement, have so far resulted in an imaginative, attractive and practical re-use of a large and complicated institutional brownfield site.

Post-consent changes / issues

- 7.34 The scheme is still in development, with numerous subsequent applications coming forward to deliver further elements of the scheme. Although minor changes have been made in some instances, these have tended to be in response to emerging issues rather than wholesale or systematic changes.



Figure 7.2: New build townhouse (top); extension to administration building (bottom)

Potential lessons

- 7.35 Graylingwell is perhaps the best example of the application of pre-planning characterisation studies currently available. While the approach taken reflects the pilot nature of the study – and could readily be refined in light of more recent developments in site-specific techniques – the output proved to be a highly valuable, authoritative and largely objective product that enjoyed considerable support from agencies, the LPA and consultees alike. This legitimacy and independence seems to have been a key aspect of its success and, unlike equivalent studies (for example landscape capacity or sensitivity studies) it was not directly challenged by the developer or stakeholders, even when its findings did not necessarily support their aspirations.
- 7.36 Its influence on the masterplan, landscape design and layout of the final development is clear. The advantages of the holistic approach to the historic environment promoted by characterisation has proved useful in ensuring that design solutions look beyond individual assets and help to produce responses that are more than a sum of their parts.
- 7.37 The study may have been so influential because it was an explicitly development-led, rather than a conservation-led, approach setting out a strong understanding of the components and significance of character areas – but also providing clear advice on the potential risks, opportunities and planning approaches that could be employed to unlock the site’s potential.

8 Hanham Hall, Bristol

Site details

Description

- 8.1 Hanham Hall is located on the edge of the former village of Hanham, now subsumed within the eastern suburbs of Bristol, in the South Gloucestershire local authority area. It lies on the edge of the Hanham Hills, a substantial area of open farmland that rises to the south east of the site and provides a key aspect of the setting of both heritage assets and new development alike. The site is ringed on the remaining three sides by 20th century housing.
- 8.2 The 6.6ha site comprises a rambling multi-period Grade II*-Listed country house, with significant 17th century elements, converted for use as a psychiatric hospital in 1916 and heavily altered throughout its working life, up to its closure in 2000 and disposal to English Partnerships by the NHS in 2004.
- 8.3 Like Graylingwell, Hanham Hall was part of the English Partnerships hospitals sites programme, and was the subject of a pilot characterisation study by English Heritage.

History

- 8.4 From the time Hanham Hall opened as one of Burden's 'National Institutions for Persons Requiring Care and Control', it was subject to significant extension and alteration, with numerous more recent buildings added to the small area of designed landscape surrounding the principal buildings. Having had a hard working life, and a period of inactivity before being redeveloped, the buildings had begun to deteriorate.
- 8.5 In 1999 an outline planning permission for residential development of the Hall was approved subject to conclusion of a Section 106 Agreement but, at this was never agreed, the permission lapsed. (An outline application for 150 homes, made in 1996, was refused on the basis of adverse impacts on the setting of Hanham Hall; this was appealed and resubmitted in 1997 but both were refused on the same grounds. The revised masterplan was the subject of the 1999 application.)
- 8.6 In 2006, the site was selected by English Partnerships and EH as one of three HLC pilot studies (with Graylingwell, and Prudhoe in Northumberland). The study was conducted in 2007 and used to inform the development of conservation principles and interim conservation management plan to secure and maintain the asset until development approaches could be agreed and contracts let. Using the detailed background information on the asset, a tender was issued for redevelopment of the site and conservation of the asset, with six developers shortlisted. Submissions were evaluated against a range of criteria, including sustainability and energy performance, conservation interventions and the ability of schemes to reconcile the two.
- 8.7 The appointed developer's team undertook further research, analysis and appraisal work through 2008, with the first application for planning permission coming forward in December 2008. A lengthy period of consultation, deliberation and further assessment continue for nearly a year, with consent issued in November 2009.
- 8.8 Three alterations to the original permission have been approved: altering block plans and reducing unit numbers in areas of the site (2011); relocating allotments, installing photovoltaic cells on all new-build elements, deleting balconies and adjusting building positions (2011); and, expansion of parking provision adjacent to the Hall, deleting the 'Sustainable Living Centre' and adjusting finishings on boundary walls.

Historic environment context

- 8.9 The site itself has a long history of occupation, dating at least to the medieval period. By the 14th century, Hanham had been divided into three manors with 'West Hanham' focussed on the site of

the present hall. The Hall comprises a two 17th century ranges with 18th century additions arranged in a broadly A-plan, joined at their apex by a substantial 19th century block.

- 8.10 Given the extent of Roman and prehistoric activity in the area, the site was considered to be of high archaeological potential, along with the possible presence of garden archaeology to the south of the Hall's principal elevation.
- 8.11 In the wider landscape, Hanham Hall enjoys a close relationship with the neighbouring Hanham Hills, with views to open countryside from the rear of the Hall being an important feature. Similarly, formal views from the main entrance – down a relict designed view and avenue – are very important. Although somewhat compromised by c.1990s development to the south, a green corridor preserving the main relationship and visibility across countryside to the south was designed into this previous scheme.

Landscape

- 8.12 Hanham is located on the edge of a large pocket of open countryside that extends into suburban Bristol from the Avon Valley to the south. Although surrounded by development on three sides, it maintains a strong connection to neighbouring countryside, and view from and through the site of the Hanham Hills are important.
- 8.13 While the site is in relatively close proximity to the A4174 ring road, this is set down in a cutting and is not a strong presence in the landscape.

Character

- 8.14 Prior to clearance, the site was dominated by a clutter of low-rise 20th century institutional buildings of varying scales and designs, overwhelming the Hall and its vestigial designed landscape. The historic character of the Hall itself and its terrace to the south is readily legible, but relationships to the hills beyond were obscured by later insertions. Outlying fields associated with the Hall were largely divorced from the core of activity.
- 8.15 In general then, the historic character of the place was heavily obscured and required detailed investigation, assessment and surgical interventions to reinstate key relationships and give the Hall itself some 'breathing space'.

Assets

- 8.16 The Grade II*-Listed Hall is the key asset on site, with six main phases of development apparent in its fabric dating between the 17th century and around 1980. Understanding the significance of each of these phases, their contribution to character and the approaches required to, where necessary, unpick elements to be demolished required very detailed standing buildings archaeology – especially where interiors remained intact.
- 8.17 The Hall, despite its relatively dilapidated state and the obvious lack of public access, is a valued local asset and reconnecting it to the surrounding community was an important principle. Similarly, ensuring that key relationships with the wider landscape were recognised and respected by new development was critical.

Issues and opportunities

- 8.18 As a highly complex, extensively subdivided and somewhat dilapidated historic building, Hanham Hall itself represented a significant regeneration challenge, necessitating major upfront investment by developers and EH alike.
- 8.19 Conversely, the relatively extensive opportunities to start from scratch in the remainder of the designed landscape – taking into account the need to respect key relationships – was an excellent opportunity to deliver a high quality, sustainable solution in an attractive location. The pre-existing characterisation study provided a useful opportunity for prospective developers to understand the likely levels of both conservation input required and the wider potential for new development.

Figure 8.1: Hanham Hall



Local policy and guidance framework

Development plan

- 8.20 The site was not formally allocated in the South Gloucestershire Local Plan, but was listed under 'Sites the Subject of Council Resolution to Approve Residential Development' for an estimated 124 dwellings. The site had also been noted in the South Gloucestershire Residential Land Availability Survey (April 2008) as having capacity for 200 dwellings over 3.4ha, the principle of housing development having been established by the 1999 consent.
- 8.21 The eventual application was complicated by the fact that it extended beyond the recognised settlement boundary and into the Bristol/Bath Green Belt, although the uses in this area were considered compatible.

Associated guidance

- 8.22 No specific guidance for the site was in place, beyond the South Gloucestershire Design Checklist SPD and guidance relating to standards for affordable housing.
- 8.23 The EH characterisation study was therefore the only piece of site-specific guidance available, albeit without any specific planning status.

Planning process

Summary

- 8.24 From inception of the project, approximately a year elapsed prior to submission of the detailed planning application. In this period, the developer commissioned a comprehensive range of studies to assist in further understanding the character and opportunities presented by the site, in addition to developing design responses to the Hall and its surroundings.
- 8.25 The principal components of the main application can be summarised as follows:
- Rehabilitation of Grade II*-Listed Hall to provide a mix of commercial, community, health and leisure uses;
 - 195 new dwellings, with generous space standards (up to 25% greater than typical);
 - One third affordable housing;
 - Open space, play-space and green infrastructure; and,
 - A new 'Sustainable Living Centre' forming a gateway to the development.
- 8.26 Like Graylingwell, the aspiration was to deliver a fully zero carbon development meeting the highest standards of energy efficiency.

Approach to assessment and design

- 8.27 The developer appears, on first glance, to have adopted a design approach that was strongly informed by context and historic character, drawing on the EH character study and commissioning additional historic and landscape character appraisal work. Similarly, the 'Conservation Principles' issued as part of the application accord closely with EH's own publication of the same name – but only to the extent that they deal with the fabric of the listed building itself.
- 8.28 While the Landscape Analysis and Character Study submitted with the application does highlight the historic landscape structure in place on site, it deals principally with views from outside the site, rather than seeking to further understand the visual relationships within the site. It is therefore more of an impact assessment / justification tool, rather than an exercise making a meaningful contribution to the design process.

Tools employed

- 8.29 The developer made use of extensive use of the full arsenal of heritage assessment techniques, ranging from geophysical survey and archaeological investigations to standing building survey and

landscape and visual impact assessment. The extent to which they have had a meaningful effect on design is, however, arguable.

- 8.30 The masterplan and accompanying Design and Access Statement demonstrate a considered approach to the site, following four key themes: connections; historic form; open space; and, views. The four character areas identified under 'historic form' are informed by, but differ from, the EH study – but is a fundamental influence on the proposed pattern of development.

Predicted impacts

- 8.31 Overall, the scheme was predicted to have a significant positive effect on the fabric and setting of the asset, addressing the adverse effects of decades of inappropriate alterations and the degradation of setting through low quality intrusions, cutting off the asset from the wider landscape.
- 8.32 The initial designs raised significant concerns for English Heritage in relation to the internal treatment of key, well-preserved, areas of the Hall's interior and some proposed interventions (notably a proposed balcony and stair structure on the eastern end of the house). Similarly, concerns were raised with regard to the likely level of intrusion of new build elements on the setting of the Hall, particularly incursions on the designed view from the main entrance.
- 8.33 At a strategic level, EH were of the opinion that the new build elements did not pay suitable regard to their context and that the scheme in general did not provide sufficient conservation gain to offset the impacts of the proposals. While subsequent re-designs largely addressed concerns relating to internal division of space in the Hall, those relating to new development in the wider landscape and terrace to the main entrance were not.
- 8.34 The developer – and the LPA – considered that the conservation deficit was well addressed by the scheme and delivered substantial public benefit that outweighed any adverse effects. EH's concerns, though shared by the LPA Conservation Officer, were dismissed by the case officer. It should be noted that, although significant concerns were raised, EH supported the principle of development and did not object outright.

Outcomes

Built scheme quality

- 8.35 In terms of physical conservation of the asset, this has largely been well informed and impacts are well balanced against conservation gain. However, in the wider landscape – beyond the minimum preservation of key views and relationships – the array of studies appear to have been far less influential, and certainly have had no effect on the physical design of new development in terms of form, height, massing or palette of materials. Similarly, the estimates of carrying capacity for the new development area appears to have been over-estimated and, on the ground, appears to be overdeveloped in places.
- 8.36 The new build elements are both relatively tall and, stylistically, a little incongruous in their setting – although they are clearly well-designed as places to live with generous allocations of space and attractive layouts. In views from the Hall looking east to the Hanham Hills, the new blocks in the foreground dominate, due to their three storey height and cluttered façade design. Looking back towards the Hall from the east of the former designed landscape, the effect is intensified by lower-rise housing in the foreground, rising to three storeys adjacent to the Hall, which somewhat overpower the building.
- 8.37 Adjacent to the main façade of the Hall, it is not yet possible to judge the effects on the ground of encroachment of the proposed 'townhouse terraces' to both sides of the principal entrance, and whether the lack of strict symmetry is noticeable. It is likely however that these blocks will, to a certain extent, compromise views to the Hall currently available from the south (through the avenue of planting in the adjacent development).
- 8.38 While the majority of conservation interventions to the Hall appear to be of a high quality, some issues with quality and consistency of render are visible, along with relatively extensive algal growth on surfaces due to poor stormwater management and lack of drip courses in places.

Outcomes for the historic environment

- 8.39 While the overall design of the development may have benefitted from more consideration of the articulation of the underlying historic landscape structure – and would definitely have benefitted from a stronger influence on the design of new-build elements – the scheme does have a positive overall effect¹³.
- 8.40 It has secured the future of a highly significant asset, and will bring it into positive community uses that neatly avoid many of the consequential impacts associated with conversion to residential uses. This is a valuable approach, helping to reconnect communities with their historic environment and giving a sense of shared ownership for the asset that will benefit residents of the development and the surrounding neighbourhood alike. Opening up of the greenspace on site, and retention of underlying historic landscape structure (despite some compromised legibility) is admirable. Similarly, the scheme does preserve – and re-establish – the key relationships of the asset to the surrounding landscape, albeit in a slightly compromised manner.
- 8.41 While the detailed concerns of the EH case officer are shared, in the context of the wider public benefit and the not inconsiderable benefits delivered by the zero carbon development, the compromises are broadly acceptable.



¹³ As far as can currently be assessed, based on the elements of the project in place at the time of the site visits.

Post-consent changes / issues

- 8.42 The main post-consent change has been an increase in the area of parking to the rear of the Hall. While this might ordinarily appear to be an adverse change, it comes at the expense of the 'Sustainable Living Centre', which has been deleted from the scheme. This was a highly modern structure, partly set into the ground, very close to the rear of the Hall. Its design referred neither to the Hall nor the rest of the new build elements. Its removal therefore does much to gain the rear of the Hall some 'breathing space', reduce an unwelcome sense of enclosure on arrival on site and further reconnect the Hall with the surrounding landscape.

Potential lessons

- 8.43 The initial characterisation study conducted by EH was undoubtedly influential, to the extent that it established the internal structure of the site as a priority for conservation and enhancement. With regard to the Hall itself, the detailed information on phasing provided a valuable starting point for understanding the asset and prioritising conservation interventions. However, the planning guidance set out in the study – particularly the site-wide suggestions – has largely been side-lined.
- 8.44 Arguably, the characterisation study could have focussed more strongly on the development potential of each of the character areas (which, in turn, could have been more tightly defined) to provide a clearer route towards desirable outcomes.
- 8.45 The overarching lesson provided by the case study is perhaps that, where publicly-funded characterisation work is identified as a requirement for sensitive sites, it will only deliver optimal value if it is taken on board by the LPA. In this case, the characterisation report does not reveal any substantial engagement with LPA officers or members in producing the study or its recommendations. Perhaps as a consequence the document was not used as a reference by the LPA case officers to any significant extent, nor did it appear to factor in decision-making.
- 8.46 Ideally, where such significant 'flagship' projects occur, there would be substantial benefit to securing LPA buy-in through close collaboration in the development of the studies and, where feasible, their adoption as planning guidance / incorporation in development briefs to give weight to their conclusions and recommendations.

9 Merchant's Quay, Gloucester

Site details

Description

- 9.1 Located at the heart of Gloucester's historic docks, Merchant's Quay stands in the centre of the main canal basin, surrounded on all sides by 19th century industrial buildings and waterfront infrastructure.
- 9.2 The site itself contained a redundant two-storey shopping centre with no realistic prospect of reoccupation that made no positive contribution to the character or quality of the area.
- 9.3 The proposed development consisted of clearance of the existing 1980s shopping centre, reinstatement of lost fabric in the adjacent listed warehouse where shopping centre access had been driven through, and erection of two parallel blocks echoing, but reinterpreting, the form of the adjacent warehouse architecture. Commercial use of the ground floor was proposed.

History

- 9.4 Gloucester Docks are an important example of a 19th century inland dock, opened around 1812 and coming into full operation around 1827 on the completion of the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal. Former warehouses line the dockside, and are concentrated on the western edge of the main basin, where the site is located.
- 9.5 The site had previously been occupied by a petroleum store, a single storey brick building dating from the 1880s, prior to its demolition and replacement with the Merchant's Quay shopping centre in the late 1980s. An application was submitted by the developer in mid-2008, seeking consent for demolition of the shopping centre, but was subsequently withdrawn in response to LPA concerns regarding the lack of a replacement scheme and the potential impact of a 'gap site' in such a high profile location.

Historic environment context

- 9.6 The site lies within an archetypical 19th century industrial waterfront area of tall, uncompromising brick warehouses and historic dock infrastructure. The docks themselves are well used and have a lively water traffic ranging from narrowboats, pleasure-craft and holiday cruisers to large, semi-permanent tall ships and other historic craft, which add much to the character of the area.
- 9.7 The majority of buildings on the dockside are listed, with the whole waterfront designated as a Conservation Area.

Character

- 9.8 The townscape surrounding the site has a very strong maritime mercantile identity, despite virtually all the historic buildings having been converted to a mix of uses.
- 9.9 The buildings generally conform to a local distinctive architectural language, imposed by their function are (mostly grain) warehouses – 6-7 storey rectangular red brick blocks, with characteristically small windows and a vertical stack of contrasting timbered loading bay doors on the gables, rising the full height of the building. Approaches to conversion have varied, with some modern glass additions (e.g. between Philpotts, Kimberley and Herbert warehouses immediately adjacent to the site) in evidence, along with a range of simpler interventions.
- 9.10 Much of the ancillary dock infrastructure and fitting remain, including fixed cranes, surface treatments, bollards and mooring rings, and the swing-bridge over the access to Victoria Dock on the corner of the Merchant's Quay site.

- 9.11 From the site, views beyond new-build development to the historic water meadows on the inside of the adjacent bend in the Severn helps to locate both the project and the docks in their wider landscape context. The site features in an iconic view of Gloucester, looking across the dock basin from the south west, the site appears in the centre of the view with Gloucester Cathedral framed between industrial buildings.

Assets

- 9.12 As noted above, the site lies within the setting of at least 10 listed structures and lies in the centre of one of Gloucester's most important conservation areas, within several significant views.
- 9.13 The project also involved limited conservation interventions to the adjacent Philpotts Warehouse, but this was restricted to making good impacts of the previous development on site.

Issues and opportunities

- 9.14 The site provided a significant opportunity to contribution to the ongoing regeneration of Gloucester's historic waterfront – a key priority for the local authority.
- 9.15 The principal challenge presented by the site was to deliver a design solution that referenced and paid appropriate respect to its context, that would not be overwhelmed by the monolithic warehouse blocks adjacent – but equally would not set up unwelcome tensions in a pivotal site within the conservation area.

Local policy and guidance framework

Development plan

- 9.16 Unfortunately, the contemporary development plan for Gloucester was an uncomfortable mix of regional (2001 South West RSS; Gloucestershire Structure Plan Second Review 1999) and significantly out-of-date local policy (City of Gloucester Local Plan 1983; elements of the 1996 alteration; First Stage Deposit Local Plan 2001; Revised Deposit Draft Local Plan 2002). In practice, this creates unhelpful uncertainty with regard to the application of policies from aged plans with no secure statutory status.

Associated guidance

- 9.17 Fortunately, a strong spatially-specific guidance framework had been established to guide the regeneration and management of Gloucester's dockside heritage. This comprised:
- Gloucester Docks Planning Brief (Interim Planning Guidance, 2006): setting out a masterplanning approach to regeneration and establishing core development principles, based on a character/action area framework.
 - Gloucester Docks Public Realm Strategy (Interim Planning Guidance, 2006): setting the parameters for acceptable approaches and principles for urban design in the docks area.
 - Docks Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals (2006): very detailed assessment of the development, attributes, issues and management options of the conservation area.

Figure 9.1: Merchant's Quay, general views



View across main basin, Gloucester Docks (Merchant's Quay on the right)



Contrast and reference between new development and conserved historic buildings

Planning process

Summary

- 9.18 For a relatively large development in a high profile, sensitive site, the application had a remarkably smooth and rapid progress through the planning system. The initial planning application and Conservation Area Consent were submitted in May 2009 and were determined at the end of August.
- 9.19 Gloucester Docks forms one part of a very large programme of investment led by Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company (GHURC), in consultation with the South West Regional Development Agency, aiming to deliver significant enhancement worth £1billion over 10 years. The proposal was therefore supporting major local and regional priorities.

Approach to assessment and design

- 9.20 The Gloucester Docks masterplan played an important role in shaping the issues affecting the site. The surrounding historic buildings were a fundamental influence on the form, massing, proportions and materials selected, adopting and reinterpreting the warehouse form.
- 9.21 The height of the two blocks that form the mass of the building were a critical factor in the design process, with their relationship to the surrounding warehouses considered particularly sensitive. Echoing the layout and relationship of the warehouse group to the south, where the Biddle and Shipton warehouses are aligned NW-SW, perpendicular to the larger Double Reynolds warehouse, provided a template to ensure the new structure remained in proportion with, but subordinate to, the adjacent Philpotts warehouse.

Tools employed

- 9.22 The guidance listed above, particularly the masterplan, were important factors in shaping the designers' approach to the site, and also provided a ready-made evidence base for more detailed appraisal of context and relevant design cues. The urban design principles established in the various documents were generally adhered to.
- 9.23 The developer's architect worked closely with GHURC, through a number of workshop sessions, to agree a development brief for the site. The following principles were agreed:
- Flexibility desirable to accommodate changing requirements.
 - Accessible form three sides, where pedestrian traffic is expected.
 - Create a new dockside space.
 - A new member of a powerful existing urban ensemble.
 - The development could consist of a number of blocks.
 - Dispose new blocks using relationships already established in the group (new blocks could have discrete links).
 - Could match the height of existing buildings.
 - Use pitched roofs to match existing in terms of angle, proportion and roofline.
 - Respect and reinforce the fundamental warehouse form, proportion and scale – but within these forms the buildings could be very contemporary.

Predicted impacts

- 9.24 No significant adverse impacts on the character and quality of the Conservation Area, or the setting of the numerous listed buildings were predicted by the developer.
- 9.25 However, the detail of the design – where the available guidance provides little advice – was the area in which differences of opinion were strongest. English Heritage and the LPA conservation and urban design officers raised concerns with regard to:
- The positioning of the new building, as it steps slightly forward from the building line established by the adjacent warehouse;

- Material choice: stack-bonded brick cladding, while configured to 'honestly' illustrate its non-structural role, may have been better substituted for a more explicitly modern material;
- Fenestration: the use of wooden window shutters, while intended to draw on the woodland loading doors of the period warehouses, was considered to be a key part of the scheme – but one that needed careful specification. Similarly, the fourth floor windows, without shutters, are a mix of styles, with mesh balcony gratings.
- Surface treatments and contribution to public realm: use of higher quality materials required.

9.26 In addition, EH raised concerns with regard to the loss of the visual impact of the south façade of Philpotts warehouse as an important element in the conservation area's character [although this is not recorded as a 'main characteristic' of the dock area]. There appears to have been consensus between EH and the LPA design staff that the architecture, while broadly acceptable, was perhaps not of the level of quality required for a site of this importance – without causing sufficient concern to warrant an outright objection.

Outcomes

Built scheme quality

- 9.27 On the ground, the scheme appears to have been well executed and, as the materials weather, it 'sitting down' into its context nicely. The concerns of consultees with regard to building position and the potential for competition with the surrounding historic buildings have proved to be largely unfounded. It is easily read as a modern interpretation of the surrounding architecture, is appropriate subservient – without being overwhelmed – and makes a welcome positive contribution to the area. When compared with the previous use of the site, despite the loss of direct views of Philpotts' side elevation, the building is a more successful use of the site.
- 9.28 Perhaps the least satisfactory element of the scheme as a whole is the very regular colour and texture of the brick used on the long façades of the building - although it is acknowledged that the cladding was explicitly intended to provide a reference, but also a contrast. Up close, however, the effect of the stacked bond with the strong horizontals of the closed shutters can appear overly 'busy'. Similarly, the use of wire gratings on the central gable window stacks, the central access decks and fourth floor windows appears overly-utilitarian, where glass may have been a more elegant solution. The main entrance to the residential portion of the building is somewhat forbidding due to the choice of galvanised steel barred gates and post boxes, and effect that is amplified by the currently empty retail/leisure units on the ground floor.

Outcomes for the historic environment

- 9.29 Despite the concerns of consultees, the building is generally a good quality addition to the townscape of the docks that should be considered to represent an improvement to the conservation area and the setting of neighbouring buildings.

Post-consent changes / issues

- 9.30 Some minor changes to the fourth floor fenestration – taking on board consultee comments – were made post-consent. Similarly, the gates and post boxes were added in 2011. Neither of these changes was significant.
- 9.31 The main issue with the scheme as it stands is the lack of a tenant for the retail/leisure units in the ground floor, without which the building lacks vitality. However, this is likely a product of delayed economic recovery and is unlikely to remain the case in the medium to long term.



Figure 9.2: Merchant's Quay in context

Potential lessons

- 9.32 The main lesson from this case is the benefit of a consensus-based strategic approach to managing and regenerating historic areas. The planning authority, its partners and consultees ensured, through the provision of appropriate strategic guidance, that the scheme which came forward met the majority of the necessary design criteria from the outset. Subsequent engagement with GHURC further refined the approach and helped to ensure buy-in from the key regeneration partner in the city. While the concerns of EH and LPA design staff were not fully addressed, in general these related to fairly subjective issues of detail that have not had a significant impact on the scheme's success nor on the historic environment of the docks. The strategic issues raised by EH also proved to be overstated when compared with the scheme's effects on the ground.

10 'The Guts', New Islington, Manchester

Site details

Description

- 10.1 New Islington was selected as contrasting example of larger-scale housing development. While the development examined does not directly involve historic fabric, it forms a component of a wider vision to regenerate a substantial area of East Manchester that is informed by the area's strong industrial heritage. The development is therefore an example of an attempt to create new character that refers to and respects local heritage, and creates tangible links to the surrounding industrial heritage.
- 10.2 The network of historic canal infrastructure forms the backbone of the area, and lies adjacent to 'The Guts'¹⁴ development. Reinstatement of historic waterways, and the creation of a new marina and 'urban beach' to the south of the case study project is intended as the centrepiece of the masterplan area and is a critical public benefit.
- 10.3 The 'New Islington Millennium Village' is located in the Ancoats area of Manchester, approximately 1km north east of the city centre, and is contained on three sides by the Ashton and Rochdale Canals. It comprises the site of the old Cardroom housing estate, on c.13ha of land owned by Manchester City Council. The area was characterised by social exclusion, poor health and housing market failure (at the inception of the project, only half of the authority's social housing stock on site was occupied). The project was intended to deliver significantly improved social housing for local authority tenants, enhancing quality of life and drawing on the strong sense of community to deliver social as well as physical regeneration.

History

- 10.4 The regeneration of the Cardroom estate, and Ancoats in general, had been under consideration by the local authority for a significant period. The necessary kick-start was provided by delivery of funding for land assembly, contaminated land remediation, environmental works and infrastructure planning – a model successfully applied in many German and Dutch regeneration projects. The North West Development Agency established a dedicated company – New East Manchester – to lead the programme and, using the RDA's powers of compulsory purchase, a huge area of land was unified in single ownership to facilitate the project. Private investment and social housing partners were engaged, with £66million in public money providing the necessary pump-priming. The idea was to provide shovel-ready sites to developers that could be taken forward and delivered quickly, to minimise the disruption to tenants – and to limit risk.
- 10.5 A masterplan for the area was developed by Will Alsop in 2002-3 and, in common with his other visions for regeneration projects, it was typically bold and unconventional. The delivery phase of the project should have been long completed, with around 1,400 new homes surrounding a network of revitalised canals and 9.3ha of new public open space. However, the reality has proved to be quite different. With the collapse in the private and buy-to-let housing markets – the financial engine charged with providing the extensive private investment required to finance the project – progress on the masterplan all but stopped. Part of the canal works was delivered, developing the 'urban beach' and Marina, but progress stalled following the financial crisis.
- 10.6 'The Guts' site was originally intended to occupy part of Alsop's 'finger plan' of linear canal basins but, as funding dried up, the available site was pushed back into the old Cardroom estate, adjacent to the one remaining street of pre-existing houses. It is the third social and affordable housing project delivered as part of the masterplan, following Islington Square/Woodward Street in 2006 and Guest Street/Piercy Street in 2007. (Other than Alsop's flagship 'Chips' building, no

¹⁴ The slightly unsettling name relates to the fact that the project is located in the masterplan's core

other housing has been developed due to the lack of market interest.) These projects were priorities as they were required to house existing tenants that had been guaranteed 'right of return' to their communities once redeveloped. 'The Guts' provides eight such units, with a further 10 providing a mix of social and intermediate rented accommodation.

- 10.7 An application for planning permission was submitted in 2009, following extensive local consultation to inform the design process. As part of the wider regeneration project, it was designed to conform to the standards set by the 2005 revision of the New Islington Masterplan – itself approved through an outline planning permission.

Historic environment context

- 10.8 The immediate area, having been cleared twice in living memory, has no upstanding built heritage directly on site. However, its wider context is one of nationally significant industrial heritage, lying a short distance from the Ancoats mill complex. The Ardwick and Ancoats Dispensary building lies at the end of the street and, if saved from demolition, will provide a critical link between the development and the area's industrial and social past.
- 10.9 Extensive archaeological investigations were conducted in advance of development, due to the high potential for remains relating to former glassworks in the vicinity.
- 10.10 The proximity to the Rochdale and Ashton Canals is an important structuring element to the masterplan and was originally envisaged as a key element of the development's setting. However, the change in the development's location means that this is unfortunately less of an influence on the project as built, eroding that link between the site, its industrial heritage and the nationally significant heritage of the Ancoats Conservation Area to the west.

Character

- 10.11 The dominant character of the immediate area is that of a place in transition – albeit one that has stalled somewhat. The main north east – south west axis of New Islington, Old Mill Street, has been subject to extensive, innovative public realm enhancements that have created real distinctiveness. Bespoke street furniture, shared spaces, diverse surface treatments and planting create a strong sense of place – which abruptly stops at the end of Weybridge Road, where 'The Guts' is located.
- 10.12 The project faces a terraced street of 1970s social housing. While architecturally undistinguished, these solid family homes are an important reminder of the social, as well as built, context of the development – and were a reference point for the designers.
- 10.13 The site lies at the interface of the [intended] dense, urban portion of the masterplan area and the lower density residential streets of the existing housing estate to the north. Consultation with the local community to inform the design indicated a strong general dislike of higher-rise buildings. Therefore, an essentially 'suburban' form was required to meet the local aspiration for 'proper houses'.

Assets

- 10.14 The key asset in the wider masterplan area is the Ancoats Dispensary building, some 50m from the eastern boundary of the site. Its setting is already heavily compromised by neighbouring development, but successful completion of the regeneration masterplan would ideally make a positive contribution. However, the future of the Dispensary is uncertain, having been proposed for – and then reprieved from – demolition. At the time of writing, it had just been awarded £10k of Heritage Lottery start-up funding under the 'Heritage Enterprise' scheme to assist in the development of a self-sustaining use and proposals for restoration.
- 10.15 The site is also in close proximity to an extensive network of historic canal infrastructure, which forms a key aspect of the wider masterplan and, when conservation and enhancement is complete, will provide significant new green/blue infrastructure networks for local communities.

Issues and opportunities

- 10.16 In heritage terms, both the key issue and opportunity was ensuring that the development met the requirements of the masterplan, and the strict client brief, while delivering distinctive domestic architecture that was strongly rooted in local forms and materials.
- 10.17 Two significant interacting constraints were the minimal budget (£1000/m²) and the need to provide generous space allowances. As tenants had been guaranteed direct like-for-like replacement dwellings, the new buildings had to meet the 'Parker Morris standards' for internal space as well as conforming to Lifetime Homes and Manchester's own accessibility design standards (which also necessitated in-curtilage parking for all houses).
- 10.18 The consultation with the local community and future tenants/owners of the properties on the site was similarly both an opportunity and a constraint. While it ensured that the design process was informed by local aspirations, it also represented a significant limiting factor on the options available to the architects in terms of housing form and design. This process did, however, raise some interesting issues around tying development into its social, as well as built, context.

Local policy and guidance framework

Development plan

- 10.19 The Manchester City Unitary Development Plan 1995 set the statutory framework for decision-making, despite being significantly out of date. Consequently, its provisions were inconsistent with national policy at the time of the planning application / determination.

Associated guidance

- 10.20 The Guide to Development in Manchester SPD and Planning Guidance 2007 provided an updated framework with regard to design and assessment of development and set the key tests that the project was required to meet.
- 10.21 The New Islington Masterplan provided the initial impetus for the development, setting the requirement for numbers and type of housing units. However, as indicated above, financial and social imperatives necessitated a reappraisal of the original development layout and form. The original vision of new waterways extending from the canal basin was abandoned, moving the development site northwards to secure access via existing streets and to connect the new housing with the existing community. This also contributed to more direct interaction with heritage assets, in the form of the Ancoats Dispensary.

Planning process

Summary

- 10.22 The planning process for the proposed development was relatively straightforward, as it was placed firmly within the context of delivery against pre-agreed masterplan and area-wide regeneration objectives.
- 10.23 The masterplan itself already had outline permission, establishing the principle of development, infrastructure provision and overall numbers of units. 29 planning permissions for New Islington were already in place prior to this application. There was, therefore, significant commonality between the suite of existing permissions and the application for the development in question.

Approach to assessment and design

- 10.24 The architects and their client, a registered social landlord, worked closely with local people to understand their aspirations for new housing the area. The firm of architects had, like those appointed for the other social housing developments at Islington Square and Piercy Street, been chosen directly by local people and therefore had a degree of legitimacy and trust that may not otherwise have been forthcoming. Broadly, the tenants wanted recognisable houses, with separate kitchen-diners and living rooms, gardens and off-street parking.

- 10.25 The designers' response was to go back to Manchester basics and develop a contemporary reinterpretation of the red brick 'back-to-back', flipping the houses around to create a row of end-to-end plots, and a second terrace of more conventional side-by-side units. This ensured that active frontages were presented to streets on both sides, and optimised the use of space on the restricted plots.
- 10.26 The traditional proportions of the terrace were scaled up to meet the stringent space requirements, and a consistent mottled brick used for the ground floor of all houses. The upper storeys alternated between grey-brown engineering brick, buff and solid red brick, taking cues from neighbouring industrial buildings and echoing the palette of materials used in Piercy Street and the adjacent Islington Square.

Tools employed

- 10.27 The key tool successfully deployed in this project, and the social housing elements of New Islington more generally, was community engagement.
- 10.28 This process helped to ensure that, as well as referencing their historical and built environment context, the schemes were able to make effective and meaningful reference to their social context – delivering more successful schemes as a result. The project architects were careful to ensure that 'cultural legibility' [their term] was at the heart of their design process and solutions. Taking on board the prospective tenant/owners' aspirations for room and space requirements, parking and gardens – wrapped up in a 'proper house' – could easily have produced heavily compromised, unambitious results. While the suburban form of the development is, perhaps, at odds with its edge-of-centre location, it does provide a solution that pays close attention to the needs of its users as well as presenting a thoughtful reinterpretation of Manchester's typical historic housing stock.

Predicted impacts

- 10.29 No significant impacts on the historic environment were predicted.

Outcomes

Built scheme quality

- 10.30 As an individual scheme, 'The Guts' delivers good quality, innovative architecture that is well grounded in its local context for an almost unbelievably small budget – proving that good design need not be expensive design. Like the neighbouring industrial buildings, there is little pretence about the scheme. The spare, uncluttered design lets the house form speak for itself and, as such, provides an interesting and valuable counterpoint to the more flamboyant Dutch gables and diaper pattern brickwork of the adjacent Islington Square. It is therefore a far more comfortable fit within the setting of an historic building than its less retiring counterparts.

Outcomes for the historic environment

- 10.31 Compared to the previous development on site, 'The Guts' makes a positive contribution to the setting of the Ancoats Dispensary and, through choice of materials and interpretation of local forms, helps to tie the new sections of the community back to both their industrial and domestic heritage.
- 10.32 Sitting as it does at the transition between the more 'urban' form of the southern masterplan area and the existing housing estates, it should serve to tie three potentially disparate areas together – although how this articulation will work once the rest of the masterplan area is built out remains to be seen. (Similarly, the future of the Ancoats Dispensary is not yet fully secure.)
- 10.33 The development is visible from the Ancoats Conservation Area to the west of the site and makes a positive contribution to its setting, clearly delineating the edge of the masterplan area and drawing the eye to the one surviving industrial building to the east of the site. (The view is, however, rather dominated by the 'Chips' building, which dwarfs the now-towerless Ancoats Dispensary.)

- 10.34 The central portion of the masterplan area as a whole unfortunately remains essentially derelict. While all necessary demolition and preparatory work has been completed, and some of the new canal infrastructure put in place (beyond the Marina and Cotton Field Park), the site is still surrounded by an unwelcoming combination of hoardings and security fencing. The new marina area, while well-used by local residential boaters, has developed crime and anti-social behaviour issues that reduce the success of the place.

Post-consent changes / issues

- 10.35 No significant changes have occurred post consent. However, some minor value engineering by the principal contractors substituted some attractive elements of the scheme – notably brick garden walls that were replaced by wooden fencing – that detract slightly from the coherence of the scheme.

Potential lessons

- 10.36 The key contribution of this and its sister projects is the role that meaningful community consultation can play in placemaking in historic contexts. Prioritising the social as well as the physical context can have significant value, and can lead to interesting and valuable architectural responses.
- 10.37 While reinterpreted spatially and temporally, the architectural DNA of the typical Manchester 'back-to-back' is clearly legible in the house design, providing a locally valued link between the domestic and social history of the area, its wider historic environment and the more radical new architecture in other parts of the masterplan area. The final effect is difficult to ascertain, given the lack of progress across much of the masterplan area, but 'The Guts' is an attractive and effective contribution to the wider regeneration project. With its sister housing development at Piercy Street (less so the more 'wacky' Islington Square) it provides a much-needed link to the area's heritage and provides an important transition feature between the Miles Platting housing estate to the north and the rest of the masterplan area. This is particularly valuable in views from the Ancoats Conservation Area – although the effect is likely to be lost on construction of higher-rise portions of the masterplan site.
- 10.38 While it is impossible to be definitive, had the community had a greater say in the original masterplan, the outputs may have been less 'inspirational' and 'iconic', but significantly more deliverable.

11 Alliance House, Newington Green

Site details

Description

- 11.1 Strictly, this case study pre-dates the cut-off point the project was originally interested in. However, student housing was identified as a significant issue for England's many university towns and cities – most of which are also home to highly sensitive historic townscapes and buildings.
- 11.2 The site is located at the north west corner of Newington Green, Islington, in an area of high townscape value – to which the China Inland Mission, forming part of the application, makes a substantial contribution. The scheme involved the renovation and refurbishment of the historic building for improved student accommodation; the addition of two symmetrical pavilions on the street frontage; the demolition of existing low quality institutional blocks in the back plot, and replacement with four new-build halls of residence; and, creation of new linear gardens to form the setting of the new development.

History

- 11.3 The China Inland Mission had been in use as student halls for a considerable period, along with the old Alliance House – a severe, four-storey brick building located in the centre of the back plot. A single brick pavilion had been added to the left frontage for retail use, with a small railing-enclosed garden to the right of the entrance.

Historic environment context

- 11.4 The China Inland Mission building lies in Newington Green Conservation Area (LB Islington), which was designated in 1970 to protect the remnants of the old hamlet of Newington Green and the urban square that succeeded it. The northern side of the Newington Green square is in Hackney, and is protected separately as Newington Green (North) Conservation Area.
- 11.5 The buildings surrounding the square are of various types and dates. Several are protected by statutory listing, including the Grade I terrace of houses dating from 1658 at Nos. 52-55 on the west side. Other buildings, including the China Inland Mission, are locally listed. At the centre of the square is an enclosed public garden, dating from the 1740s, which Newington Green Action Group, English Heritage and other partners have helped to reinvigorate from its degraded and traffic-dominated state in the late 20th-century. The area has a long tradition of Protestant dissent and political radicalism.

Character

- 11.6 Despite its urban location and bustling surroundings, Newington Green manages to maintain something of its village green character.
- 11.7 The buildings that face and relate to the Green are varied, but include several groups of buildings of historic and architectural significance, most notably 52-55 Newington Green which date from 1658, London's oldest surviving brick terrace houses. Despite the variety, there is generally an appropriate scale and consistency of materials to the buildings, and to their relationship to the Green. On the west side of the Green, projecting shop frontages appended to the building line add visual clutter, but also contribute to the sense of vibrancy that is intrinsic to the area. To the south, a large block of mid-century social housing of dark brick with contrasting white-painted concrete access decks provides strong horizontal elements that contrast with the verticality of the surrounding period terraces.

Figure 11.1: Alliance House, general views



China Inland Mission, looking west from Newington Green



New garden blocks



Assets

- 11.8 The China Inland Mission building is a locally listed building at Grade A. It was constructed in a monumental baroque style in brick as the headquarters of the China Inland Mission, an organisation founded by James Hudson Taylor in 1865 and responsible for over 18,000 converts to Christianity. A grand archway in the centre of the building leads through from Newington Green to a garden and the four new blocks of student residences. The whole site is identified as an archaeological priority area in Islington's UDP 2002.
- 11.9 There are several individual Tree Preservation Orders for several different species and a group of six lime trees in the gardens behind the China Inland Mission.

Issues and opportunities

- 11.10 The renovation of the China Inland Mission offered the opportunity to rationalise and improve existing student accommodation, and revise the street frontage by adding two symmetrical retail pavilions to replace the elderly and unattractive brick example and the small, undermanaged garden. Demolishing and replacing the original Alliance House was a major opportunity to improve the design – and accommodation – quality, and to enhance the visual amenity of the surrounding properties. While the trees on site represented a physical constraint, particularly for construction, they provided a ready-made core for a new landscape garden.
- 11.11 While the wider conservation area is particularly sensitive to development, the garden plot was assessed as having sufficient capacity for development to accommodate the revised layout with no adverse effects.

Local policy and guidance framework

Development plan

- 11.12 The Islington Unitary Development Plan 2002 provided the framework for decision-making. As would be expected, the plan contained extensive policies for the protection and enhancement of the LPA's conservation areas, including governing development in back gardens.

Associated guidance

- 11.13 Design advice associated with the Conservation Area statement for Newington Green was in place – although this largely related to buildings fronting on to the Green. Guidance with regard to development in back gardens of the Conservation Area was similarly targeted towards domestic extensions, rather than large-scale redevelopment.

Planning process

Summary

- 11.14 An application for full planning permission, and for Conservation Area Consent to demolish Alliance House, was submitted in 2002. While the full case file is no longer available, significant negotiation was required, and consent was not issued until December 2003. Subsequent applications for discharge of conditions (e.g. in relation to gate design – the first of which was refused) were submitted over a considerable period.

Approach to assessment and design

- 11.15 The approach taken to extending the China Inland Mission with two retail pavilions can be viewed as relatively light-touch modernism. While the Conservation Area design guidance stipulated that shop frontages would be expected to be of traditional design and materials, such an approach would have been inappropriate for the frontage of a historically significant building. Instead, the very simple pavilions were designed to be symmetrical and subordinate to the façade of the Mission as well as being clearly of their time. Extensive assessment, including producing

photomontages of the proposed designs, was undertaken to satisfy the LPA that the character of the Conservation Area would not be adversely affected.

- 11.16 Design of the new accommodation blocks was rather less constrained, although the increase in height over the old Alliance house was a concern. Similarly, the design, management and maintenance of the landscape scheme – particularly in relation to the protected trees – also caused issues and was eventually the subject of extensive conditions and provisions in the S106 agreement. Retaining existing mature planting is a key component to the success of the development, in addition to securing the visual amenity of surrounding properties.

Tools employed

- 11.17 Beyond the guidance provided in relation to design in the Conservation Area, no site-specific tools were applied. As the proposal pre-dated the requirement for a Design and Access Statement, there was no single, holistic means of drawing together and presenting the design principles and approach to understanding and responding to context. This may have been helpful in allaying the concerns of the LPA.

Predicted impacts

- 11.18 The scheme was not predicted to have adverse effects on the character of the Conservation Area, however, the LPA maintained their concerns with regard to the potential effects of the retail pavilions. The submission of further detailed design information was therefore required as a condition on the permission.



Figure 11.2: Use of lower cost materials in less visible spaces (left); strong contrast between new and historic materials (right)

Outcomes

Built scheme quality

- 11.19 There are views to the China inland Mission building from around Newington Green, but the rear Alliance House and garden ground are largely hidden by the enclosing 4-storey 19th- and 20th-century residential and commercial developments of Newington Green, Green Lanes, Poet's Road and Leconfield Road. The predominant traditional building materials of the area are red and buff brick and grey slate.
- 11.20 Before the redevelopment a single brick pavilion projected forward on the left hand side of the China Inland Mission building, a pair of tall brick gatepiers fronted the street, and railings enclosed a small garden on the right hand side of the entrance arch. Respecting the near-symmetrical arrangement of the principal elevation of the China Inland Mission, two similar box-like retail/restaurant pavilions and small terraces were added to the front (replacing the old brick pavilion and the garden) and the entrance gatepiers were removed.
- 11.21 The old Alliance House to the rear of the China Inland Mission was a monolithic, 4-storey, rectangular-plan, buff-brick building oriented east-west. The four replacement 4- and 5-story blocks are in a contemporary idiom, with paired white pavilions grouped around larch-clad open stairs and communal facilities. The butterfly-roofed blocks are oriented north-south in rows with gardens in between to allow direct sunlight to most of the rooms and to the neighbouring properties. The blocks adjoining the rear of Green Lanes are a storey lower than the blocks towards the middle of the site, again in consideration of the neighbouring properties. All the blocks are different in design, but use a common architectural language in their articulation, such as asymmetrical patterns of vertical glazing. A particularly successful aspect of the project is the use made of the existing (protected) heritage trees as the basis for the landscaping. The site has a tranquil and secluded feel, even though it is just metres away from extremely busy traffic routes. The blocks are not tall enough to be seen from outside the site, and the glimpse of the blocks and the garden through the arch of the China Inland Mission building (the sole access point) is inviting. The bright white finish provides a modern counterpoint to the surrounding historic brick.

Outcomes for the historic environment

- 11.22 The China Inland Mission remains an important and imposing feature within the Conservation Area. The retail pavilions, while comparatively bland (an effect intensified by their grey drab colour scheme), do not compete with the main façade nor intrude on the Conservation Area as the east-facing frontage has shop-fronts for almost its entire length.
- 11.23 The new residence blocks represent a significant improvement over the old, institutional halls. It makes a lively contribution to the architecture of the area and, although only visible to the general public in glimpses, they do improve the visual amenity of the surrounding properties. While necessarily utilitarian, the design is of a high standard and is commensurate with the sensitivity of a back plot location. The landscaping scheme does much to soften the stark white lines of the buildings and help them settle into their garden setting.

Post-consent changes / issues

- 11.24 Some minor changes have occurred post-consent, but these have not significantly affected the scheme.

Potential lessons

- 11.25 This scheme is successful where so many student housing projects create poor places that add little to their surroundings. This appears to have been largely the product of a design team with a strong commitment to quality and the determination to develop and pursue a vision that was not necessarily well received in the first instance. Newington Green is a highly sensitive setting for

development, but the project was designed to fit within its context and made the most of existing landscape features to help a strictly modern design be successful in that space.

12 'Summers Field', Papworth Everard

Site details

Description

- 12.1 Papworth Everard is a relatively small (population c. 3,000) settlement in rural Cambridgeshire, located within a rough triangle formed by Cambridge, Huntingdon and St. Neots. Papworth Everard stands on the line of Roman Ermine Street, which bisects this triangle. Despite a long settlement history in the area, Papworth Everard remained small and comparatively isolated up to the early 19th century when substantial improvements undertaken by the local landowners expanded the village and was responsible for a number of estate cottages and the school, as well as the building of Papworth Hall and its associated park and gardens. The village retains some of this early 19th century character, but the more recent influence of Papworth Hospital and its associated 'Village Settlement' is the strongest current influence and has been the engine for local housing growth since the early 20th century. Significant housing expansion of varying quality has occurred since the 1970s.
- 12.2 The 'Summers Field' site is a fairly traditional settlement expansion development, located in open fields behind ribbon development (associated with the Village Settlement and the historic settlement pattern) along Ermine Street.

History

- 12.3 The 11ha greenfield site was allocated for a minimum of 259 dwellings in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, which was adopted in February 2004.
- 12.4 An outline planning application, submitted in 2005 (approved 2006), did not specify the number of proposed housing units, but included provision for access, associated open space, outdoor recreation, strategic landscaping, allotments and a community orchard, in addition to the demolition of 18,20, 52 and 54 Ermine Street and 1 & 3 St John's Lane.
- 12.5 The application for approval of reserved matters in 2007 envisaged the total number of new dwellings at 365 units.

Historic environment context

- 12.6 In 1918, the Cambridgeshire Tuberculosis Colony was relocated to Papworth Everard and began the village's long association with pioneering medical practice and research – and also doubled the population between 1918 and 1921, and again by 1931. Papworth estate was entirely converted to a TB hospital, with rapid growth in ancillary buildings and housing for rehabilitated patients. The 'Papworth Village Settlement', founded in 1927, was designed to house recovering and rehabilitated sufferers, giving them a route back into a reasonably normal life (although at the time TB could not be fully cured). The work of Dr Pendrill Varrier-Jones is widely regarded as a pioneering stage in the development of holistic treatment of both medical and social aspects of health – treating the whole patient and their environment, not just the disease. With the development of antibiotics and TB vaccines, and the inception of the NHS in 1948, the hospital and Settlement began accepting a wider range of disabled people that would benefit from the model of holistic care. From the late 1960s, Papworth Hospital began to develop into one of the UK's leading cardiothoracic surgery centres, achieving a number of firsts – including the UK's first successful heart transplant; Europe's first heart-lung transplant; the first ever heart-lung-liver transplant; and the UK's first beating heart transplant. This success has resulted in consequent additional growth of hospital infrastructure, and knock-on requirements for housing for medical staff.
- 12.7 This unique development process has left the village with a very mixed architectural legacy – but much of which has important historical value.

Figure 12.1: Summers Field, general views



St. Peter's church, with development encroaching from the right



Summers Field, typical street



Echoing traditional styles and materials

Landscape

- 12.8 The village is set within rolling boulder clay farmlands. The patterns of enclosure around the village, particularly to the north east preserve an extensive area of pre-Improvement field boundaries. Woodland and hedgerows are relatively sparse, meaning that the copses on the west side of the village are reasonably distinctive in the landscape.
- 12.9 The site sits on a shoulder of land that falls away from Ermine Street to the west, and is therefore visible from the new bypass/distributor road that loops around the village on its west side. The road itself is now a significant in the landscape and will, once the associated planting matures, sever views back to the village and the attractive St Peter's church at the core of the historic settlement.

Character

- 12.10 Currently, Papworth Everard has quite a mixed character, appearing mainly as a ribbon settlement to travellers on Ermine Street. Papworth Hall and its parkland are an important presence, with mature specimen trees adding a grandeur to the east side of the village. There is also, unfortunately, a slight air of dilapidation with several Village Settlement public buildings unused and in a deteriorating state of repair.
- 12.11 The core of the historic village was located to the west, congregated around St. Peter's Church.

Assets

- 12.12 The Summers Field site has no direct statutory heritage designations, but it is located within the setting and views to/from the conservation area and several listed buildings. Following pre-development archaeological evaluation in 2006 and 2008, evidence of Mesolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Saxon activity was identified.
- 12.13 At the time of the outline planning application in 2005 and the approval of reserved matters in 2007, the Papworth Everard Conservation Area extended only to the area around the west end of Church Lane including St Peter's Church, the site of the medieval settlement, a number of 19th-century buildings, a nurses' home and a small area of historic landscape. (The revised Papworth Everard Conservation Area boundary, adopted in July 2011, included an enlargement of the original conservation area at Church Lane and a new large detached area taking in Papworth Hall and its parkland, Papworth Hospital and Village Settlement, and a number of properties along the western side of Ermine Street.) The Summers Field development site directly abuts the south-western side of the newly enlarged conservation area at Ermine Street, and the entrance to the development's North Boulevard (beside the old Estate Office) now lies within the conservation area.
- 12.14 The village contains a scheduled monument (moated site to the east of Papworth Hall), two Grade II* listed buildings (St Peter's Church and Papworth Hall) and Grade II listed buildings (St Peter's Lych Gate, Papworth Hall South Lodge, 20-22 Church Lane and the late 18th-century thatched cottages at 28-30 Ermine Street). The development site affects the setting of the listed Ermine Street thatched cottages, St Peter's Church and to a lesser degree Papworth Hall, its associated parkland and the south lodge.
- 12.15 The Papworth Everard Conservation Area Appraisal identifies three key periods of historic interest in the development of the village: medieval to 1800; the Hall, Estate and other buildings of the 19th and early 20th centuries; and 1918 to 1945, when the Village Settlement buildings were constructed as part of a pioneering approach to the treatment of tuberculosis at Papworth Hospital. The medieval settlement developed around St Peter's Church, but centre of gravity shifted during the 18th century to the strong south-east to north-west linear feature of the old Roman road from London to York (Ermine Street). The construction of Papworth Hall on the east side of Ermine Street in 1809-13 further served to reinforce Ermine Street as the focus of development in the village, and this was continued by the Cambridgeshire Tuberculosis Colony when they took over the Hall in 1918. As the hospital grew throughout the 20th century, increasing development eroded the parkland setting of the Hall.

Issues and opportunities

- 12.16 As the site was allocated in the development plan, the principle of development was established. However, managing the visual effects of the development on the setting of heritage assets – and the village as a whole – was a key constraint.
- 12.17 With an essentially blank canvas, ensuring the new development was appropriately connected, both physically and conceptually, to the existing village was an important opportunity. However, the limited access to the site – formed by the demolition of existing buildings on Ermine Street – reduces this potential somewhat.

Local policy and guidance framework

Development plan

- 12.18 The site was allocated in the development plan, and was therefore supported in principle by the LPA.

Associated guidance

- 12.19 A Development Brief for the site was prepared in 2003, establishing the broad parameters for the site.

Planning process

Summary

- 12.20 Given the scale of the development, the initial outline consent was followed by 12 subsequent applications for approval of reserved matters, extension of consent duration and discharge of conditions. This makes tracking the progress against key issues problematic, particularly where individual condition approvals are refused or held over.

Approach to assessment and design

- 12.21 In line with the development brief, the developer employed an urban design-led approach, attempting to understand the site's context and define character areas within the site that would be developed in particular styles and densities to achieve a suitable fit with the area.

Tools employed

- 12.22 Although an 'urban design study' accompanied the application, and much was made of a design approach informed by context, this appears mainly to have been deployed in justification of the proposed layout. While the provision of extensive open space, creating views to St Peter's Church and open countryside, the development pattern and form pays little heed to its location.
- 12.23 A landscape and visual impact assessment was undertaken, indicating the visibility of the development from both the 'bypass' road and in the wider landscape.
- 12.24 It is considered that, as a scheme of substantial size and uncertain effects, full EIA may have been a more effective way of unifying assessments on a range of topics (albeit that the case was determined prior to the 2008 updating of the EIA Regulations with regard to multi-stage consents).
- 12.25 A Sustainability Appraisal was required by condition on the outline application, however this was tightly drawn around specific reserved matters and therefore did not deal effectively with wider strategic issues of the settlement or heritage assets' setting. (Indeed, any conclusions on this point would have been moot, given that the site was already allocated for development and the opportunity for strategic action had been missed.)

Predicted impacts

- 12.26 Establishing a clear picture of the predicted impacts of the development is highly challenging for the outside observer – as it must surely have been for the LPA. The avalanche of submitted information, over 12 separate applications, is poorly integrated and makes developing a coherent picture of the development, much less its effects, a significant challenge.
- 12.27 The extent of the Conservation Area at the time meant that, despite the development being adjacent, relatively minor effects were predicted – in common with the setting of St Peter’s Church. Extensive landscape mitigation was proposed to improve the proposal’s integration with the surrounding area, and a major programme of archaeological survey and evaluation was required – given the site’s proximity to Ermine Street and the long settlement history in the area.

Outcomes

Built scheme quality

- 12.28 It is not yet possible to assess the full impact of the development on the heritage assets of Papworth Everard, as the new buildings and landscaping are not complete in the areas where there is potentially most interaction (the northern end of the site nearest St Peter’s Church and where the Northern Boulevard of the development meets Ermine Street beside the old Estate Office, and behind the thatched cottages). The scheme is complete behind the Village Settlement houses on the west side of Ermine Street, but because of the topography and existing planting it does not impinge greatly on the street scene in this newly-designated part of the conservation area.
- 12.29 With regard to the impact of the scheme on the plan of the village, it further erodes the historic linear layout almost to the point of obliteration. However, this is a process that has been in train for the last twenty years or so, and this development is far more responsive to its context than most of its predecessors in the other quadrants of the village. Ermine Street, the main street, was not included in the Papworth Everard Conservation Area until 2011, some five years after outline planning permission was granted for the Summers Field site.
- 12.30 The key feature of the layout of the new development is a winding boulevard that wraps around the back (west) of the Village Settlement houses on Ermine Street and through a horseshoe-shaped green, Summers Field Green, at the centre of the design. There are numerous building types, styles and sizes within the development, ranging from traditionally detailed detached houses to mews-type houses and terraces of contemporary townhouses. Roofing and walling materials are also varied within a traditional palette. The layout makes good use of the sloping topography, and the landscaping within the site is of high quality and attractive.
- 12.31 Although the scheme is not complete, it is possible to see a number of strategies for mitigation and visual integration of the development with the rest of the village. The design uses and strengthens existing boundary planting. The plantations along the south-western boundary have yet to mature, but will serve to screen the long skyline views of the development from the bypass. Similarly, the effect of the south-eastern boundary fence will be softened by the planting. The densest development of buildings is at the centre of the site, with lower densities and more green spaces on the edges. The largest planned greenspaces are Cow Brook Public Open Space along the full south-western length of the development and the balancing pond and recreation area next to the Grade II* St Peter’s Parish Church. A further small green and semi-mature planting will be located adjacent to the Grade II thatched cottages at 28-30 Ermine Street. The Urban Design Study (2007) is weak in respect of understanding and awareness of built heritage issues, but it does show attention to the principles of good place-making, and demonstrates that the designers looked at other parts of the village for models of typical features, such as boundary treatments. Framed views from Church View Square, at the centre of the site, are planned to take in three of the key listed buildings of the village: St Peter’s Church, the Ermine Street thatched cottages and Papworth Hall.

Outcomes for the historic environment

- 12.32 In general, the development does not appear to have any unacceptable impacts on individual assets. The scheme represents a significant extension of Papworth Everard Village, and inevitably has a large impact on this previously agricultural hinterland of the village. In terms of reduced boundary densities, green buffer zones, soft edges and screen-planting, the design is responsive to the heritage designations that were in place at the time Summers Field was planned. For such a large and dense development in a small community, it fits relatively discreetly behind the main street. From other vantage points, the scheme is more visible at present, but it is likely to become better screened as the new planting matures.
- 12.33 A major revision of the Papworth Everard Conservation Area boundaries took place in 2011, extending the area along the entire north-eastern side of the development site. The Papworth Everard Conservation Area Appraisal was adopted at the same time, but too late to inform or influence the planning of Summers Field.

Post-consent changes / issues

- 12.34 A number of changes to housing mix have occurred, along with some changes to styles and design approaches (with both main developers insisting on providing only 'off the peg' designs – albeit tailored to the regional context). These have not, however, had a substantial bearing on the scheme's quality or impacts.



Figure 12.2: Development immediately adjacent to Grade II 18th century thatched cottage off Ermine Street



Figure 12.1: Panorama from west, showing development intrusion into views of church and historic village core

Potential lessons

- 12.35 Perhaps the key issue affecting the site is the level and approach to site assessment undertaken in informing development plan land allocations. In this instance, the process pre-dated the requirement for SEA / SA, but the extent to which formal consideration was given to strategic heritage, landscape and setting issues is unclear. Had these issues been given more careful thought, the development brief and associated policy approach could have been framed to secure a more context-driven approach to design. Equally, it may have exerted a stronger influence on the predicted capacity for development. What appears certain, from examination of the LPA's appraisal of similar potential expansion sites around the village for the emerging Local Plan, is that these issues are now given significantly more attention.
- 12.36 The value of EIA as an approach for gaining a holistic and proportionate understanding of the effect of development is underlined by this case. The interaction between impacts on the wider historic environment, the setting of the village and the character and quality of the landscape may have been more effectively understood and mitigated had they been drawn together in a coherent fashion. While developers – and LPAs – are often reluctant to require EIA for housing development, it potentially offers a beneficial and clearly-defined, proportionate approach to understanding the effects of development and provides a positive, iterative process for improving the quality of design solutions. Similarly, it offers a higher degree of certainty and accessibility for consultees and communities alike without necessarily incurring greater costs.

13 'Tibby's Triangle', Southwold

Site details

Description

- 13.1 Situated in the heart of historic Southwold, 'Tibby's Triangle' was an attractive, but potentially challenging, location for a comparatively large housing development. Despite its geometric name, the site is actually an awkwardly-shaped, stretched polygon filling space between historic backlands, an important local greenspace and the precincts of Southwold's fine medieval church.
- 13.2 The site was previously Adnams Brewery warehouse which was to be relocated, freeing it for potential development. Adnams – a major local presence – retained an interest in the site and specified a mixed use element for the southern portion of the site, to be run as a flagship store and café.

History

- 13.3 The site had been controlled by Adnams since the 1980s, with a variety of warehousing uses present up to 2008. The decision to relocate their distribution and warehousing operation out of town created a major opportunity for redevelopment, and to enhance the sensitive townscape character of the area (not least through the removal of significant heavy goods traffic from the centre of the town).
- 13.4 The 2006 Local Housing Needs Survey revealed illustrated a strong need for new housing in central locations, particularly in the more affordable sectors. However, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment undertaken by Waveney District Council the following year failed to identify any significant potential within Southwold, citing the level of constraint imposed by heritage sensitivities and a lack of available land. The use of the emerging site as housing therefore addressed a very strongly identified and locally supported need for development.
- 13.5 The developer, a mass housebuilder both based and specialising in East of England-specific developments, recognised the sensitivity of the site and a need for a bespoke, high quality approach. Similarly, Adnams retained a strong degree of control over the approach to development and design – which the company viewed as critical, given their local standing as a major employer and custodian of substantial elements of the town's built heritage.
- 13.6 An application for planning permission for 34, later increased to 38, dwellings was submitted as part of – for the area – a radical mixed use reinterpretation of the locally-characteristic 'ginnel' passageways between historic streets. The scheme included a small semi-public open space, Adnams café and shop and a new pedestrian route between Field Stile Road and Victoria Street. The scheme, being far more dense and unashamedly modern and 'urban' in style created very mixed reactions locally, and a range of concerns in relation to potential effects on character and heritage. However, it was granted permission and has since been the recipient of several design awards.

Historic environment context

- 13.7 The centre of Southwold is highly sensitive, with the entire old town centre designated as a Conservation Area. Of the buildings in the Conservation Area, only a vanishingly small proportion – including the former warehouse on the site – are not listed or defined as buildings of local importance. The site was originally glebe land (i.e. tied to the church to support the clergy) and remained undeveloped into the 19th century.
- 13.8 The site lies directly adjacent to the Grade I-listed St Edmund's church, widely regarded as the finest example of a medieval 'seaside style' gothic church in England. It was built almost entirely as a single phase between c.1430-70, and is a stunning example of flint cobble flushwork, laid in intricate chequer pattern on the tower front and porches. The tower is a key landmark across

much of the town. The site also fronts onto Tibby's Green, one of the town's important local green spaces adjacent to the church precincts.

- 13.9 Glimpsed views of the site, and the church beyond, are available between historic buildings across the Conservation Area, adding to the interest – but also the sensitivity – of the site. Given the early origins of Southwold, and concentrations of medieval activity around the church, the site was also regarded as being of high archaeological potential.

Character

- 13.10 Southwold is the archetypal Suffolk seaside town, and displays rich built heritage tradition tracing its development – and economic success – from the medieval period to the present day. A very careful and longstanding commitment to conservation, including from Adnams as the key urban landowner and industrial user, has preserved the town to a remarkable degree. In addition to outstanding buildings, the town's green spaces are a key aspect of its character affording views through the dense urban fabric to St. Edmund's church, the lighthouse and down to the sea.
- 13.11 It is a highly desirable location and a popular tourist destination, as the 'high end' restoration and use of Southwold Pier attests.

Assets

- 13.12 The key asset likely to receive effects from the development was St. Edmund's church. The wider Conservation Area was also susceptible to adverse effects on character and quality.

Issues and opportunities

- 13.13 The site presented a major opportunity to address an identified need for housing in the centre of Southwold, particularly with regard to affordable housing. The proposal therefore included 10 (approximately 1/3 of the project) units to be managed by a local housing association, fully mixed within the development.
- 13.14 The previous use of the site detracted somewhat from the character and quality of the immediate area, although as a relatively low-rise structure it was not widely visually intrusive. New development therefore offered a unique opportunity to deliver enhancement to the area, as well as establishing long-lost pedestrian connectivity through the site through a new public realm scheme. The mixed use element of the site, and the retention of Adnams association, was also a key opportunity to secure local legitimacy and ensure roots in local culture.

Local policy and guidance framework

Development plan

- 13.15 The Waveney Core Strategy (January 2009) set the framework for decision-making and includes a general policy requiring the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets, their settings and the local distinctiveness of non-designated built environments. It refers developers to the relevant Conservation Area Appraisals and management plans, stating that these set the necessary tests for development in designated areas.

Associated guidance

- 13.16 A Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Southwold (2008) was in place, and provides a very detailed street-by-street assessment of character and sensitivity. It is, however, much more strongly orientated towards managing alterations to individual buildings and no specific planning approaches or management priorities are provided for the relatively large character areas defined. Key views are identified, but the definitions of special interest and character are set out in a highly discursive fashion, making the planning tests to which applications will be subject challenging to define.
- 13.17 Although the Suffolk Design Guide (2000) was in place, it is unlikely that this had a direct impact on the solution.



Development in background, looking west



Framed views of St. Edmunds church



'Ginnel' through development site

Planning process

Summary

- 13.18 An application for planning permission was submitted in 2009. Considerable concerns were raised by Council officers in relation to design, parking issues and fit of the design within the Conservation Area. Similarly, there was a substantial body of objection from the Town Council and local people – although anecdotal evidence suggests that the scheme also enjoyed considerable local support.
- 13.19 When consent was granted, it was strongly conditioned to ensure that the development was built as designed.

Approach to assessment and design

- 13.20 The architects, Ash Sakula, were selected through an invitation-only competition run by Adnams with Hopkins Homes as the preferred developer/contractor.
- 13.21 The design approach centred on developing a very strong understanding of local context, how the site and internal spaces could relate to the existing urban grain. The scale and style of the buildings draw on local traditions and the surrounding built environment, echoing the wide variety of materials, heights and rooflines.
- 13.22 The development is noticeably denser than the surrounding area, a fact that contrasts particularly with the open space of Tibby's Green. This more 'urban' approach provoked mixed opinions, but was central to optimising the number and range of units delivered on the site and creating interesting delineation of public, semi-private and private space. The approach was described as *'...a reinterpretation of Southwold's urban form of large blocks grouped around publicly accessible yards'*.

Tools employed

- 13.23 As noted above, the key technique employed in design development was an appreciation of context sufficient to understand the key characteristics of local urban form and styles to enable an effective contemporary reimagining. Consultation with neighbours was vital in reducing conflict over privacy issues, necessitating the provision of a large boundary wall.

Predicted impacts

- 13.24 While the Council had concerns regarding potential over-development – which were exacerbated by a subsequent application converting two townhouse units to flats (a product of the economic crisis, required to maintain the development's viability) – these were allayed by both the general quality of the scheme and the substantial public benefit of enhancing the conservation area and creating new, vibrant public spaces.
- 13.25 While it was acknowledged that the development was more visible from the church than the existing use, appearing centrally in the view back towards the town, this was not felt to be a significant enough impact to warrant refusal.

Outcomes

Built scheme quality

- 13.26 On the ground, the development is of outstanding quality and makes a very positive contribution to the urban realm and grain of that part of Southwold. The new 'ginnel' affording public access from Victoria Street to Field Stile Road and Tibby's Green is particularly welcome, funnelling views in both directions and creating an interesting and welcoming interplay of light and materials. This is, however, notably more successful from the Victoria Street end, as in the opposite direction viewers are faced with the reflective aluminium bulk of the café cutting through the view. Delineation of public and private space is generally well managed and creates opportunities for interaction.

- 13.27 The frontage to Tibby's Green, which appears a little bland on paper, works well and sets up an attractive mix of public and private green space – as well as being a key feature for these family homes. The subtle changes in level of the roof line, floor heights and fenestration add interest and are a strong reminder of the local vernacular. The palette of materials is well chosen and specified, pulling in influences from across Southwold and including: natural brick, whitewash/render and tarred gables – although in this case these are a stylistic conceit rather than a practical response to wind and spray off the sea. Other neat touches within the public realm include timber sections reclaimed from the groynes on Southwold beach, set into flint pebble-topped concrete.
- 13.28 Unfortunately, some of the value of the public realm scheme is reduced by the ubiquity of the car within the development – although the need for parking is generally well managed for such a small site with so many units.

Outcomes for the historic environment

- 13.29 It must be acknowledged that the bulk of the three-storey townhouse blocks within the view from the south porch of St. Edmund's church is an unfortunate intrusion in an otherwise low-rise panorama. However this view makes no special contribution to the setting of the church or its significance and could not therefore be considered to have a significant adverse impact. Similarly the view from the west door of the church is now defined by the townhouse blocks overlooking Tibby's Green. These frontages work well with the period buildings on the opposite side of the green space but are still prominent, if not actually dominating the view. Again, where considered against the previous use – despite their obvious visual presence – they certainly have no worse and effect on the setting of the church.
- 13.30 Rather more positive is the management of view *to* the church from with and around the site, which is very much in keeping with the existing urban grain of Southwold. This establishes a very positive relationship between the church tower and the new public spaces within the development.
- 13.31 Overall, the development is a high quality response to a very challenging site, and one which rises to the challenge posed by design in historic environments.

Post-consent changes / issues

- 13.32 The addition of units, and associated parking, had a slightly unfortunate effect on the public space within the development, adding visual clutter and generally reducing the amount of civic space.



Potential lessons

- 13.33 This case study illustrates the value of developing a site- and settlement-specific understanding of the built environment at a functional, as well as aesthetic, level. While this should be standard part of the design process, too often schemes are concerned mainly with appearance rather than understanding what makes historic places successful places. For example, in this case, prioritising connectivity and making use of a local stylistic trait with real functional advantages in terms of liveability and promoting positive social interaction.
- 13.34 The use of design competitions by landowners is surprisingly rare for housing developments. In this instance however it provided a positive tool to bring together well-respected architects with local delivery partners, with good results. It may be an interesting approach that could be applied to other 'difficult' sites in historic contexts. In this case, it would have been interesting to understand the level of 'creative tension' between designer and developer, and how this informed the final design solution.

14 Weedon Hill Major Development Area, Aylesbury

Site details

Description

- 14.1 'Weedon Hill Major Development Area' is located on the northern edge of Aylesbury, in open countryside gently rising towards the north. It sits on the periphery of the River Thames's floodplain, which creates a green corridor between Aylesbury's existing suburbs and the site.
- 14.2 As a major commuter hub for London, Aylesbury is subject to significant housing demand and development pressure. To manage this, a series of Major Development Areas designed to absorb this development have been designated on the fringes of the town.

History

- 14.3 A greenfield site, the 48.6ha MDA was initially identified in the draft deposit Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (1998), and considered favourably at Inquiry in 2001 and adopted in 2004.

Historic environment context

- 14.4 The 2005 Aylesbury Environs Study identified the MDA site as part of an intact Parliamentary enclosure landscape, dating to 1802, and recommended its retention, or that necessary development should reflect the large-scale sub-divisions of the surveyed parliamentary enclosures. The County Council undertook extensive research on behalf of English Heritage into the possibility that a Civil War battle occurred within the site, and that the Quarrendon deserted medieval village and moated site itself included Civil War earthworks. Limited archaeological evidence (24 pieces of musket shot) was discovered during the pre-development archaeological investigations to support these claims.
- 14.5 The development is visible in long views to and across Aylesbury town centre from the surrounding upland countryside, and from the A413 approach to the town from Hardwick and Weedon.

Landscape

- 14.6 Beyond the limits of Aylesbury, the landscape comprises open vale farm, characterised by low levels of settlement, limited topography and large-scale landscape structure and pattern. Hills to the north define the visual limits in most views, with a sense of isolation frequent away from the main roads.
- 14.7 Extensive historic landscapes, such as the medieval village of Quarrendon, are a key feature – although not generally highly visible except at relatively close range.

Character

- 14.8 The site itself, prior to development, was part of a well-preserved Parliamentary enclosure landscape and was of some local significance in its own right. However, directly adjacent to medieval Quarrendon, it provided a useful illustration of the development of the rural landscape.

Assets

- 14.9 There are no heritage designations directly affecting the site. The very large Scheduled Monument (SM) at Quarrendon lies diagonally to the north-west of the MDA, sharing a short length of mutual boundary hedge. The SM comprises the ruins of St Peter's Church, a moat and ponds, substantial

embankments of a Tudor garden and rabbit warren and the remains of other garden features and extensive medieval settlement remains.

14.10 The site was deemed to be of high archaeological potential.

Issues and opportunities

- 14.11 The main historic environment issue involved in developing the site was the conservation of the setting of Quarrendon deserted medieval village. While development in this location was not predicted to affect any functional or physical relationships, visibility of a large modern settlement in close proximity – significantly extending the arc of view affected by development – was a key consideration.
- 14.12 Conversely, the site offered an interesting opportunity for the creation of a sizeable new community that, if appropriately informed, could draw on features and character from the area to develop its own distinctive sense of place.

Local policy and guidance framework

Development plan

- 14.13 Regional Planning Policy Guidance 9 (2001) provided planning advice for the South East Region and set a broad framework against which housing development should be set.
- 14.14 The Buckinghamshire Structure Plan 1996 identifies Aylesbury as a Strategic Growth Area, with a need to accommodate a minimum of 3,000 new homes up to 2011. The designation of the MDA was, at least in part, a response to this County-level imperative.
- 14.15 The MDA was allocated in successive development plans therefore the principle of development was supported in that location. However, the Local Plan, through Policy AY16, set very detailed requirements for development within the allocated area including, inter alia:
- Need for provision of a new distributor road to the north of the site, and suitable junctions to the A413;
 - Contributions to public transport enhancements;
 - Establishment and safeguarding of significant new non-motorised access networks;
 - Proportional contributions to schools provision;
 - Maximum area of new housing (22ha);
 - Extensive open space and recreational provision;
 - Provision and safeguarding of land within and around the periphery of the site for open amenity land, to provide an appropriate setting for the development;
 - Safeguarding of natural and landscape features on site, and their incorporation within design solutions;
 - Extensive archaeological evaluation to inform design;
 - [verbatim] The development shall take account of the importance of the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Quarrendon, and the protection of its setting.
- 14.16 The final point, based on predicted impacts at the strategic level, set a positive framework for understanding and mitigating effects on the asset's setting.



'Hartwell Meadows': green infrastructure and Poundbury-inspired 'new urbanism'



View over Weedon Hill MDA to Aylesbury



Mixing scales and styles to create more characterful streets

Associated guidance

- 14.17 An extensive Development Brief was prepared to provide a coherent framework to guide design and development at Weedon Hill. The brief set the requirements for the housing component, as well as the extensive mixed use and infrastructure provisions necessary for a sustainable community and established an indicative masterplan.
- 14.18 An extensive Design Code was also established for the site, dealing with all necessary issues down to a very detailed level. Reference to local character was a key requirement.

Planning process

Summary

- 14.19 An application for outline planning permission was submitted in 2003, with a long series of reserved matters applications following on up to early 2013. An outline application to extend the site northwards was refused on 10 April 2013 and, at the time of writing, an appeal was in progress.

Approach to assessment and design

- 14.20 EIA was required at outline stage, therefore impacts on the historic environment were identified at an early stage and presented in a relatively coherent manner. It should, however, be noted that approaches to setting were not as well developed at the time – particularly given the need to assess effects against a generic development layout, rather than detailed proposals.
- 14.21 The Weedon Hill design principles were set out in the Development Brief as follows:
- The MDA will deliver a high quality urban development that relates positively to its setting, reflecting local distinctiveness.
 - This will be achieved by drawing inspiration from the best quality traditional urban and rural details of layout, form, scale and materials to create a richness of place with strong character.
 - Traditional ingredients of tight knit street patterns, vertical massing and variety of street scene will be embraced (and re-interpreted to avoid pastiche development), exploiting the best elements of the Vale to exhibit a clear sense of belonging to its locality.
- 14.22 Core reference sites for 'local distinctiveness' were established: Aylesbury (Bourbon Street, Castle Street, Church Street, Parsons Fee, Rickfords Hill, Temple Street, and St Mary's Square), Aston Abbots, Hardwick, Weedon, Whitchurch, Winslow Market Square, Long Crendon Square, and the Manor Waste at Wendover. The predominant materials are red brick with slate and tiled roofs. Particular attention has been paid to the edges of the development, where there is significant new planting, and the roofscape reflects traditional Aylesbury Vale features such as chimneys and gabled dormers.
- 14.23 The policy established in the Local Plan, and expanded in the Development Brief and Design Codes, stressed the importance of respecting the setting of Quarrendon SM. Early on, the definition of landscaped buffer zone between the site and the asset was identified as the best option from a design perspective.

Tools employed

- 14.24 A mitigation strategy was adopted for the development in relation to the SM at Quarrendon. Landscape and visual impact assessment informed the definition of maximum building heights in key areas of the site, and the necessary depth and density of planting to screen the development from Quarrendon. This approach accorded with the policy requirements of the Local Plan, which stipulated generous allotment of amenity space around the fringes of the site.
- 14.25 This 'Quarrendon Green Zone' sets the 2-storey residential units back from the north-western corner of the MDA, where there is a short direct boundary with the scheduled area. A children's play area occupies the north-western corner of the MDA, and existing mature field boundaries have been strengthened with additional planting to shield the monument from visual disruption. The topography of the development site, which slopes southwards away from the ridge of Weedon

Hill and the scheduled area, and the retention of the existing dense hedgerows and trees effectively screen the MDA from the monument.

- 14.26 The larger Berryfields MDA adjoins the Quarrendon SM on the west side. As part of the Section 106 Agreement relating to that MDA, the owners/developers agreed to transfer the Quarrendon site to the newly-formed Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust once 300 houses were occupied at Berryfields. The intention was to establish an 80-hectare public open space providing educational, health, cultural and environmental benefits, including conservation of the monument and improved access. Funding has been obtained through the Section 106 agreement and from the Department for Communities & Local Government Growth Area Fund, Buckinghamshire County Council and English Heritage. Further funding is currently being sought from a variety of grant giving bodies.
- 14.27 Long stretches of the old field boundary hedges have been incorporated into the development and form the western and northern boundaries. The street names of the new development, such as Prince Rupert Drive and Colonel Grantham Avenue, reflect key figures in the Battle of Aylesbury.

Predicted impacts

- 14.28 With the proposed mitigation in place, the predicted impacts on the SM were very minor as intervisibility was all but eliminated.
- 14.29 The development did result in the loss of part of the Parliament enclosure landscape, but this was of local significance at most – although as part of the setting of Quarrendon and a good example of a multiperiod rural landscape was potentially of more importance.



Figure 14.2: View of Weedon Hill MDA from Quarrendon medieval village; note success of landscaping approach (reinforcing existing field boundaries to increase screening of houses)

Outcomes

Built scheme quality

- 14.30 The MDA was conceived as a standalone settlement in visual terms, but carefully integrated with the existing infrastructure of Aylesbury. The site is surrounded by open green spaces on three sides. To the south, a broad linear park has been laid out along the flood plain of the River Thames, which separates the MDA from the continuous spread of Aylesbury. There is open farmland to the north and west, and to the east, the A413 trunk road forms the boundary.
- 14.31 With the exception of the provision of work facilities, the development adopts many of the principles of the New Urbanist movement, famously exemplified by the Duchy of Cornwall's Poundbury estate on the edge of Dorchester in Dorset. The detailed implementation of the development was guided principally by the Development Brief of 2003 and the Design Code of 2004, which were undoubtedly developed with Poundbury in mind.

Outcomes for the historic environment

- 14.32 Other than the loss of the relationship between Quarrendon and the later enclosure landscape, the outcome has been good. While new screening will rarely be appropriate as a heritage management solution, in this instance it simply made use of existing landscape structure – in the form of robust hedges – which were reinforced and augmented by a stand-off distance for development. While on paper this approach appeared to sever Quarrendon from an important part of its setting, in the field the hedge lines are so dense and the topography such that the view is not significantly changed.
- 14.33 An issue that is not addressed – and cannot yet be evaluated on the ground – is the significant potential for cumulative effects with the Berryfields MDA. While the LPA is resisting attempts to extend Weedon Hill to the north, and development on this rising ground – in combination with the less well mitigated impacts from Berryfields – could have a major adverse effect on a nationally significant asset.

Post-consent changes / issues

- 14.34 Other than a separate outline application to expand the development area – currently at appeal – the series of recent applications have been connected with delivery or minor modifications to the core scheme and have had no significant effects.

Potential lessons

- 14.35 While on paper, the proximity of the MDA to such an extensive Scheduled Monument appeared to be highly problematic, detailed appraisal of the site, the asset and the existing landscape structure – itself a heritage asset – provided an elegant and effective solution.
- 14.36 The development, with Berryfields MDA, is likely to deliver significant public benefit through guaranteeing the ongoing conservation and management of Quarrendon, as well as improvements to public access and the provision of interpretation.
- 14.37 The success of the development lies in the early recognition of the potential constraint, and building it in to every stage of the planning process. Ensuring statutory recognition through a specific development plan policy (that is well worded to avoid any reference to levels of impact) provides clarity for both developer and decision-maker. Similarly, the wealth of guidance provided by the Development Brief and design codes has helped to create a new community that, as far as it is currently built, seems like a successful, characterful and well-connected place to live. The green infrastructure elements, along with generous access provision, are welcome features that draw on the influence of the Thames Valley to the south and make an important contribution to distinctiveness.
- 14.38 The architecture does not seek to make a powerful statement, but seeks to establish itself in its local context without resorting to out-and-out pastiche. There is welcome variation in styles and

materials across the site as required by the design codes – although some approaches are less successful than others. For instance, the designs are noticeably less successful where they exceed two storeys, as local references give way to more generic, value-engineered approaches.

4

Research outcomes

15 Research outcomes

Introduction

- 15.1 This section of the report draws together the findings from the case studies and presents a more systematic analysis of their potential meaning and implications for future policy and delivery approaches to housing in historic contexts.
- 15.2 It should be noted that, as these opinions derive from a very small sample of contemporary housing development in England, they cannot be considered to be wholly representative. They are necessarily subjective and are based principally on judgements of performance in relation to the historic environment, rather than the holistic 'planning balance' of each case.

Summary of findings

- 15.3 Table 15.1 below presents a brief summary of findings against each of the assessment tools and techniques identified at 2.32 above.

Table 15.1: Summary of evaluation

Assessment tool	Case study	Commentary
Characterisation	Graylingwell Hospital; Hanham Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Provides a good, objective and transparent understanding of the character and significance of the asset – easily unpicked or expanded upon by developers + Ties the asset in to the wider landscape and highlights key relationships and views that should be considered in redevelopment + Is, to some extent, a 'development-led' approach – studies are predicated on the need for redevelopment, accepting the principle of re-use of the site, and presenting a positive framework for consideration + Highly scalable and can respond well to varied site conditions and characteristics + In both case studies, HLC reports stimulated additional research and assessment – although outcomes a little more compromised at Hanham, both studies were influential + Partnership approach – at its best with agency, LPA and developer buy-in (per Graylingwell) - Heavily dependent on LPA adopting / buying into the key principles set out in the study – otherwise less impetus for developer to use information - Lack of 'official' planning status is a potential drawback, as no clear link to key policy tests (inevitable in a pilot study – but could be addressed in future use / used as evidence base for planning briefs and SPD) <p>Successful pilots / proof-of-concept, but little evidence of approach being adopted independently</p>

Assessment tool	Case study	Commentary
		by developers, or encouraged by LPAs as yet
<p>Conservation Area / townscape Character Appraisals</p> <p><i>Sites in brackets – outside CA boundaries</i></p>	<p>Axwell Park; (Accordia); (Bellrope Meadow); Graylingwell; Merchant's Quay; Alliance House; (Papworth); Tibby's Triangle</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Generally give a very useful grounding in the history, development, character and significance of the area + Particularly useful where linked to dedicated policy / management priorities (Merchant's Quay, Axwell) - Only Gloucester Docks and Axwell CAAs provide meaningful guidance on new development of any significant scale (both targeted towards regeneration, and part of wider strategy) – advice generally focussed on alterations and householder development / terms of Article 4 Directions - CAAs examined do not follow a systematic approach to defining the special architectural or historic importance of the area, diminishing their utility in decision-making / transparency of planning tests for development
Historic Area Assessment	<i>Not used in case studies</i>	
Masterplans	<p>Axwell; Accordia; Graylingwell; Hanham; New Islington; (Papworth); Weedon Hill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Ideally provides a clear framework within which new development will sit, and allows a good understanding of how historic character and landscape features have been incorporated (or otherwise) + A potentially useful vehicle for engagement between designers, regulators, consultees and communities + Graylingwell and Hanham demonstrate the value of a characterisation-driven approach to masterplanning + Highly valued marketing tool, attracting investment and interest – particularly through the involvement of high-profile design practices + Can be helpful in illustrating and testing approaches to key landscape/historic environment features and designing in mitigation (e.g. 'Quarrendon Green Zone' at Weedon Hill; less successful but still considered at Papworth) - In some examples, particularly New Islington, masterplanning seemingly more of an end in itself than a response to context
Planning / development briefs	<p>Accordia; Merchant's Quay; Weedon Hill; Papworth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Provide a very clear set of expectations, priorities and policy principles for development and are readily tailored to key sensitivities and opportunities + Good means of giving developers, decision-makers and stakeholders certainty with regard to necessary inputs – and likely outcomes + Useful tool for LPAs in attracting investment in potentially 'difficult' sites + Can set clear measures of success with regard to conservation gain and public benefit, and establish robust planning tests

Assessment tool	Case study	Commentary
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Familiar approach for both LPAs and developers, therefore potentially higher 'comfort levels' in preparing and agreeing to terms + Generally draw on, or spring directly from, development plan policy - Can require an extensive evidence base – but this is common to all the techniques discussed
<p>Local and regional design guidance</p> <p><i>Case studies in brackets – local design guidance in place, but no evidence of application</i></p>	<p>Accordia; Bellrope Meadow; Papworth; Weedon Hill; (Merchant's Quay)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Where applied, influence clearer in materials selection than building form or urban grain - Bellrope Meadow shows clear influence of local vernacular traditions / Essex Design Guide – but is rather misapplied; illustrating the importance of not just applying design guidance/cues as 'window dressing' - Placemaking guidance substantially less successful; some application of English Partnerships Urban Design Compendium, but generally cosmetic
<p>Asset or area-specific guidance</p>	<p>Axwell Park; Accordia; Merchant's Quay</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Accordia very successful in working within design standards imposed by 19th century covenants affecting northern edge of site – driving high quality reinterpretation of traditional forms, massing and proportions + Weedon Hill is an interesting example of use of site-specific design codes – drawing on local styles and materials – to create character and interest in an entirely new neighbourhood + Successful examples making good use of available evidence (CA appraisals) and linking advice to conservation outcomes + Very useful companion to more rigid planning brief - Potentially costly to produce, and could be perceived as overly restrictive (although good opportunities to engage with developers where design codes are required for larger sites with multiple delivery partners, cf. Weedon Hill)
<p>Landscape/Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment</p>	<p>Axwell Park; Graylingwell; Hanham; Papworth (partial); Weedon Hill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Good opportunity to integrate assessment of effects on heritage assets and historic character with wider issues of landscape character and quality + Clear, objective methodologies for production of visualisations – although differ between case studies due to age + Enable testing / iteration of design and mitigation solutions - Can be a source of confusion, with inappropriate (solely visual) criteria used in assigning value and sensitivity to receptors, rather than basing on heritage significance [this is a widespread and continuing problem] - Reliance on matrix-based approaches to defining 'sensitivity' and significance of impacts prevalent in LVIA (particularly in EIA) particularly unhelpful with regard to detailed understanding and qualitative

Assessment tool	Case study	Commentary
		judgements required in relation to setting ¹⁵
Design and Access Statements	All, except Alliance House and Accordia outline application	<p><i>Not an assessment tool in themselves</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Generally very useful in outlining the key design principles and approach to the site / assets, and the rationale for design decisions + Often very detailed, drawing extensively on supporting studies and assessment (e.g. Hanham) and giving valuable link between evidence base and design outputs + Particularly useful in non-EIA cases as only place where holistic discussion of effects and mitigation can be provided - Influence / use in decision-making unclear – although clearly of use, especially for multi-stage consents - Across the board, statements were thought to put rather a positive spin on developments, principally discussing value added by proposals rather than impacts
National and local planning policy frameworks	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Most effect where tailored specifically to the character/significance and key issues facing the local historic environment + Where tools discussed above were clearly linked to local policy (e.g. Axwell, Accordia and Merchant's Quay), they are particularly effective + Generally, local policies are relatively generic – but often well-supported by lower tier guidance (e.g. CA appraisals) - Opportunities are being missed to more sharply focus supporting advice and guidance on how it will be used by developers, and as a decision support tool for LPAs - Major variation in prioritisation of maintaining up to date development plans, creating some conflict with national policy (although not generally a significant problem in the cases examined)

Evaluation of assessment tools and techniques applied

Strategic management and design guidance

- 15.4 Of the 11 case studies examined, five [Axwell, Accordia, Merchant's Quay, Graylingwell and Hanham] could be considered to have had such guidance in place – although, of these, Graylingwell and Hanham were characterisation-derived (and had extensive EH involvement).
- 15.5 The long-standing strategy developed for Axwell Hall did, despite the subsequent financial problems, secure an appropriate scheme on paper. As consented, the scheme would have delivered an appropriate range of public benefit and addressed what was a very significant conservation deficit. The guidance appeared to provide the LPA with a valuable set of criteria

¹⁵ This issue should ideally be resolved by the less rigid approach advocated in Swanwick (2013) 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition' London: Routledge (Landscape Institute / IEMA). However, the ongoing trend for dislocation of assessment of impacts on setting from other effects on the historic environment remains a key issue.

against which proposals could be judged – and also provided the developer with a measure of certainty as to the level of assessment and design inputs required. Similarly, this would have provided a framework for the ongoing management of the assets, had the scheme not stalled.

- 15.6 The design guidance for Papworth and Weedon Hill MDA was developed either in partnership with or solely by the developers, therefore ceding much of the potential control and some of the benefit of LPA-led approaches. However, the Weedon Hill suite of documents were developed to specifically comply with and deliver the requirements established in the Local Plan – including key heritage protection measures. The LPA therefore had appropriate policy tests in place against which reserved matters applications could be readily assessed. Similarly, this guidance was informed by a far more coherent approach to the historic environment, secured through a transparent and robust EIA process (albeit against an outline scheme).
- 15.7 There is clearly a substantial benefit in developing site-specific guidance, particularly where assets or their settings require careful management. The Axwell and Weedon Hill examples highlight the benefit of integration with adopted planning policy, giving the design criteria developed statutory weight. (In this context, the current status of the Axwell project can be viewed as an aberration, and unrelated to the quality of guidance, assessment or LPA decision-making.)

Positive planning tools

Development / planning briefs

- 15.8 Development briefs are a well tried and tested approach to site-specific planning issues that are intended to improve the efficiency of the planning and development process and improve the quality of development. They are widely used for constrained sites, where specific guidance is required and/or the policy context is complex.
- 15.9 Each of the case study examples that employed such briefs were subject to a range of interacting constraints and opportunities, and LPAs recognised the need to steer prospective developers towards a preferred solution – or at least the appropriate criteria to assist them in the right direction. These sites were all longstanding development aspirations for the LPA, whether as major land allocations fulfilling local or regional growth imperatives (Aylesbury and Papworth), flagship sites requiring innovative and exemplary development (Accordia) or part of a larger area-wide regeneration scheme (Gloucester Docks). While the Papworth example is arguably less successful, the three other examples have been shown to perform well against their own measures of success – and their overall outcomes for the historic environment. A further critical advantage of this approach, at least for the successful examples examined, is that they are closely linked to development plan policies and can be readily transposed into meaningful planning policy tests against which proposals can be assessed.
- 15.10 In terms of providing certainty for all – LPA, developers and, ideally, relevant consultees and communities – planning and development briefs are a particularly useful tool. Their potential application is, however, generally limited to sites either controlled by local authorities or their partners or, less frequently, for significant land allocations. Like any detailed site-specific study, they require significant resource and appropriate expertise to fulfil their potential.

Masterplans

- 15.11 Definitions of what constitutes a masterplan vary significantly, ranging widely in scale and detail and from the conceptual and aspirational to the highly specific. Like planning and development briefs, masterplans are a very widely used planning tool, but they serve a much wider range of functions.
- 15.12 Two of the case studies that made most extensive use of masterplans could not have been more different. Alsop's high concept New Islington masterplan, while bold and imaginative – and an important marketing tool – was arguably more about creating a canvas for iconic buildings than understanding, interpreting and enhancing the site's context. Although New Islington as a whole has partly stalled due to externalities, it is interesting that the more humble, locally appropriate – and locally desirable – houses of 'The Guts' work well in their new position and establish much more of a dialogue with neighbouring historic buildings that would have been possible through the masterplan. The masterplan developed for Weedon Hill, while less ambitious and certainly less of a statement, probably pays more regard to its surroundings, using existing green infrastructure to help root the development in the landscape and reduce impacts on the historic environment.

- 15.13 Graylingwell and Hanham's masterplans, derived from detailed appraisals of the historic fabric and development potential, are rather different. They depict far more of a finished, illustrative product than a working design tool. Where masterplans are likely to add particular value is in illustrating and articulating design options, for example in informing community and stakeholder engagement – particularly where they employ three-dimensional presentation techniques to explore key relationships or approaches to mitigating impacts (in the case of Weedon Hill).

Partnership working

- 15.14 The partnership approach embodied by Graylingwell and Accordia in particular illustrate the value and importance of developers working closely with regulators to understand and manage sensitivities; with the obvious caveat relating to attempts to demolish the RSG bunker on the Accordia site. This is not intended to advocate an uncritical or laissez faire approach by LPAs, but instead for both parties to engage in open and meaningful dialogue, helping to challenge assumptions and refine responses to challenging circumstances. In any case, there should ideally be a robust local policy framework underpinning discussions and providing a clear backstop that ensures expectations are clear, along with the tests which development is expected to pass.

EIA as a design tool

- 15.15 Environmental Impact Assessment is intended as a proportionate and iterative process that informs, as well as assesses, design solutions. It is, however, widely perceived as a cumbersome, costly and bureaucratic process that adds delay to the development programme. Similarly, housing developers are often keen to avoid EIA due to this perception – and the belief that it can be perceived negatively by communities and also provides additional grounds on which to challenge applications (e.g. in relation to procedural issues, adequacy of information, approach to assessment)¹⁶. While there is a grain of truth to this, Weedon Hill provides an able illustration of the value that EIA – even at outline stage – can add to proposals.

Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans

- 15.16 Since 1967 (1990 under the current regime), LPAs have been able to designate areas for their special historical or architectural interest. Understanding and expressing this significance, and the key qualities and values that combine to create it, is critical in ensuring development affecting such areas can have appropriate regard to these considerations. Equally, where this information is to be used in a decision-making context, it is in the interests of both developers and decision-makers to have clear, transparently developed criteria against which proposals can be assessed.
- 15.17 For the majority of Conservation Area Appraisals / character statement etc. encountered through the case studies – with the exception of Gloucester Docks¹⁷ – the majority do not provide guidance or advice on new development of any significant scale. Similarly, none of those examined explicitly establish the key components of 'special architectural or historic importance' that warrants protection. Instead, lengthy discursive descriptions that vary considerably in focus and detail are generally provided. While these are a useful introduction to the built heritage of the area, there is no clear hierarchy or prioritisation of particular characteristics.
- 15.18 While any such attempts to refine the key qualities of a conservation area would require careful consideration, such information – particularly where presented spatially – provides a very useful design and assessment tool.

Characterisation

- 15.19 The two developments involved in the characterisation pilots [Graylingwell and Hanham], while broadly similar on first glance, had quite different processes and results. The HLC studies for both sites, although using slightly different approaches, had broadly similar outputs providing a detailed analysis of site history and the key assets and landscape features contributing to the significance of each place. However, the ways in which this information was applied seems to

¹⁶ There is also a widely-held misconception that, because housing development is not explicitly named or dealt with in Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations, they are not applicable to developments of this type. This is not the case, as the courts take a broad and rigorous approach to interpreting the Regulations

¹⁷ Axwell is rather different, as it includes all the conservation and management priorities from the Axwell Hall Strategy, and is therefore comprehensive.

have been quite different. Additional historic landscape research, masterplanning and detailed design of Graylingwell seems to have drawn more heavily on the HLC study, transposing the character areas and the advice provided into the development proposals. A key factor in this case seems to have been that both the LPA and the developer recognised the value in the study, and were willing to make use of its advice (although not to accept it uncritically). At Hanham, however, although the detailed work on building phasing was used, the wider landscape advice and guidance does not appear to have been as influential for either developer or LPA.

- 15.20 It should be noted of course that the purpose of pilot studies is to test new approaches; and both studies can be considered successful tests that provide valuable lessons. Chief amongst these is that LPA buy-in appears to be critical in securing the wider benefits delivered by site-specific HLC studies. Where such approaches could be timed to feed into local authority or partnership projects, contributing to planning briefs or concept masterplans and, where relevant, site-specific policy and advice, they could have a very positive influence on development proposals. As with the other tools examined the provision of suitable policy hooks in local plans, where possible, should be a priority.

Participative planning

- 15.21 Despite wider issues relating to the New Islington masterplan, the participative approach adopted for the Registered Social Landlord-led housing developments, including 'The Guts', offers some interesting insights – although not principally relating to heritage. Involving local people in the selection of design teams, and giving them a positive influence on schemes delivered in their area has ensured that, as well as relating to their physical and historical context, new buildings pay reference to all important – but often neglected – social context that is critical to the creation of successful places.

Evaluation of policy frameworks

Development plan policies

- 15.22 The suite of development plan policies relating to heritage protection and management examining through this project range from the very high level and generic, to the minutely-detailed and site-specific. Similarly, the assessed projects were tested against local policy frameworks that, various, had been adopted only a few months previously (Weedon Hill) to those that had already been out of date for over a decade (Gloucester).
- 15.23 While keeping plans up-to-date is a key requirement of the NPPF, particularly where the national context has moved on, development plan integration of heritage and, where appropriate, asset-specific policy is a major advantage. This worked well at Axwell and Weedon Hill where site-specific policies were in place to guide development and provide a clear frame of reference for developers and decision-makers.

Role of strategic assessment

- 15.24 The development plan process is *the* key opportunity for LPAs, consultees and communities to shape the strategic approach taken to housing. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the principal means by which effects on the historic environment can be avoided or reduced at the strategic level, and can be used to test various scenarios for development and settlement expansion considered during the Local Plan process. SA is a potentially powerful tool for understanding the location, scale, quantity and type of new housing that is appropriate for communities and the historic environment alike – but the availability of good quality information and the professional skills to interpret it are the keys to unlocking its value.
- 15.25 Recent experience also suggests that English Heritage is seeking a stronger understanding of setting issues in SA of proposed housing allocations, which will add significant value to assessments. The traditional designation-based approach is important in identifying specific receptors of change. Ideally though, this should be supplemented by a strong understanding of how individual assets, landscape and townscapes interact to create a sense of time-depth and

character. However, experience also indicates that the allocation of the necessary time, resources and expertise to secure such a level of understanding is likely to prove challenging in practice.

- 15.26 In light of the ongoing controversy surrounding land allocations by Shropshire Council in the setting of Old Oswestry Iron Age hillfort, further research into the current approaches taken to setting in SA/SEA of land allocations would be timely – although potentially contentious. It could help to understand the issues faced by LPAs, the capacity available to them in support of assessments and the opportunities available to test historic landscape/setting-based approaches against 'live' data.

Identification and evaluation of process issues

Precedent

- 15.27 The Thaxted case provides an interesting, if potentially concerning, example of one arguably inappropriate development establishing the principle of housing development in a sensitive location, leading to further applications and land allocation for this use by the LPA – despite the availability of good evidence to the contrary.
- 15.28 This underlines the importance of the development plan process, and associated assessment, in ensuring that LPAs only support development in sustainable locations.

Post-consent monitoring and enforcement

- 15.29 The Axwell case seemed, in many ways, to be an exemplar of enabling development, delivering a high quality solution that was respectful to its setting and delivered significant public benefit in addition to the necessary conservation gain. On site, however, the project is a rather different matter, with the majority of the work necessary to deliver public benefit not completed and the two principal assets (the Hall and the designed landscape) facing an uncertain future.
- 15.30 While this failure is a direct consequence of the financial crisis, it does raise some interesting questions around the financing of significant restoration projects – and the approach to enforcement when things go wrong. English Heritage recognised this risk in their consultation responses and recommended the use of a bond to secure the restoration work to both the house and landscape. While this was also included as a recommendation in the officer's report, it is not referred to in the decision notice (where, if required, it would normally be referred to under notes or 'informatives'). No copy of any S106 Obligation was available for consultation to confirm. It appears, from available records, that no enforcement action has been attempted at the site despite significant anger on the part of residents and the wider community, particularly in relation to the lack of landscape restoration.
- 15.31 This raises a key issue with regard to the monitoring of progress against agreed planning objectives in complex cases. This is a potentially resource-intensive activity for LPAs, necessitating regular site visits and expert advice. In other types of development, the cost of resourcing the work of a 'conditions monitoring officer' (CMO) based with the LPA or an independent Clerk of Works (often for supervision of potential archaeological or ecological impacts) is met by the developer and is secured through conditions/obligations. While it is recognised that Government is currently seeking to reduce the use of S106 obligations, and is keen to see their content scaled back to reduce the burden placed on developers, their use in the protection and management of nationally significant assets may be a proportionate response. Indeed, the input of Clerks of Works and CMOs is often valued by developers – particularly in the construction of wind energy developments – in reducing the risk of unanticipated impacts or potentially costly enforcement action. Likewise, their reports to LPAs, on agreed timescales and against relevant metrics, can provide reassurance or rationale for early intervention.

Design and Access Statements

- 15.32 Design and Access Statements (D&AS) were submitted for all developments falling within the relevant time period (Accordia's outline application, and Alliance House were submitted prior to the requirement being introduced).

- 15.33 The statements produced, while generally useful in terms of understanding the high level design process and decision-making, were occasionally more concerned with presenting an attractive product than providing detail on key design moves. In some cases however (e.g. Axwell, supporting application to vary condition regarding terrace layout), very detailed addenda were produced justifying even relatively minor changes in approach that would undoubtedly have been of assistance to decision-makers. Similarly, Hanham's D&AS was very comprehensive and provided (arguably too much) detail on all aspects of the proposal, from site analysis down to detailed material specifications and design justifications for all aspects of the proposal.
- 15.34 The extent to which the D&ASs informed decision-making is less clear, but they can undoubtedly play a very important role in synthesising often disparate details of a development and helping to clarify the decisions that have resulted in particular effects. Particularly for non-EIA development, where there is no obvious locus for a coherent discussion of the design process and its outputs, these are valuable documents.
- 15.35 However, across the board, the D&ASs examined were felt to put rather a positive spin on developments, with little explicit discussion of design moves as mitigation of identified adverse effects – although it is recognised that they are not intended as 'mini-environmental statements.' As they are required for applications in World Heritage Sites, Conservation Areas and to accompany applications for Listed Building Consent, there may be some advantage to EH providing some advice on the advisable content (beyond that in the 2010 DCLG 'Guidance on Information Requirements and Validation') for applications in sensitive areas. It is perhaps unfortunate that government opted to withdraw the requirement in relation to applications for variation of conditions – although LPAs could still use their discretion in requesting additional information on design processes where this is germane to decision-making.

5

Conclusions and recommendations

16 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

What is working, and why?

Planning policy

- 16.1 Perhaps the most obvious conclusion is that the development plan remains the most powerful means of influencing development proposals, and is also a key means of ensuring the benefits of the tools and techniques discussed in this report are optimised.
- 16.2 While policies requiring the protection and enhancement of the historic environment are often relatively generic, site-specific requirements have proven to be most effective in ensuring compliance with overarching aims and the application of lower-tier guidance (e.g. development briefs). This does, however, require a good deal of foresight and research on the part of LPAs to recognise the key opportunities or development priorities that are likely to be affected by significant sensitivities.
- 16.3 The long lead-times involved in integrating design and assessment tools with development plans may be a significant limiting factor, but the results for sensitive areas and regeneration priorities can be substantial.
- 16.4 Similarly, developing a secure evidence base may also be challenging, as the financial and human resource involved in, for example, Conservation Area management planning or preparing development briefs can be significant. It is recognised that pressure for resources in LPAs is already great and that resourcing or contributing to the maintenance of key services – such as HERs and curatorial provision – is a significant challenge. Front-loading investment in ensuring that well-informed and enforceable frameworks are in place for key assets / areas could be justified in terms of offsetting the potentially major costs attached to the reactive effort required in responding to inappropriate applications. Conversely, it is also recognised that the (albeit limited) fee income from development management can help to meet some of this need and may dissuade LPAs from taking a more proactive stance where funding is uncertain.
- 16.5 Given these constraints, site-specific policies (or even inclusion of references to supplementary planning documents) will probably be most effective where used sparingly to target action on locally-agreed priorities. They may also be a useful 'hook' to secure buy-in from governmental, NGO and private sector partners, demonstrating LPA leadership and providing an important opportunity for consultation and approval. Development plans also offer a means of engaging and securing the support of the elected members of the authority that will, ultimately, make many of the decisions affecting the local historic environment.

Design and assessment tools

- 16.6 Across the case studies examined, there is considerable diversity in the approaches employed in assessment and design of development.
- 16.7 Development briefs are, as a familiar form for both LPAs and developers, perhaps under-used in historic contexts. While necessitating a reasonable degree of resource, they can be substantially lighter-touch than a full character assessment or development of an indicative masterplan. However, they have significant potential in setting out conservation and design principles – even and at a reasonably high level – for sensitive sites (for example, key Buildings at Risk or problematic land allocations) at an early stage. At the very least, these would provide useful talking points for pre-application discussions, to ensure that the main issues are drawn to the developer's attention at the earliest opportunity.
- 16.8 As a 'proof of concept', the site-specific HLC pilot study at Graylingwell has ably demonstrated the benefits of the approach, and was undoubtedly a key tool that the design team were able to interpret and respond to. Similarly, regardless of the compromises made in both hospitals

projects, the presence of the character studies served to focus attention on key issues and features that may have otherwise been afforded less attention. It is, however, unclear the extent to which the approach has been adopted on other sites despite promotion of the approach by EH (this is discussed in more detail below).

- 16.9 These tools are at their best when strongly aligned with local policy frameworks, giving them additional weight in decision-making. This also means that they can be given a higher profile in pre-application discussions so that expectations are clear from the outset.

Partnership approaches

- 16.10 A key lesson from some of the successful projects reviewed – particularly Graylingwell and Accordia – is that close partnership working between LPAs, agencies and developers are a proven means of delivering significant developments and good outcomes for the historic environment. At Weedon Hill, the proactive approach of the LPA in assisting with the identification and management of sensitivities – along with the imposition of a clear framework within which development was to occur, ensured that a very large scale scheme was delivered with little adverse effect and delivering substantial public benefit. This illustrates the benefits of proactive partnership working for all parties – rather than the costly and unsatisfactory adversarial approach that characterises much housing development in England (accounting for over a third of all appeals received and determined by the Planning Inspectorate in 2012/13).
- 16.11 From the developer's perspective, working on sites that already benefit from the support and engagement of both the LPA and national agencies should provide a good degree of certainty for investors – as well as potentially justifying more intensive design input.

What are the key missed opportunities?

Resourcing

- 16.12 The human aspect to conservation and development proposals is a key factor, but one which is easily overlooked. Each of the successful projects, regardless of their awards or problems, have involved extensive engagement between developers, designers, LPAs and consultees, including EH, to discuss and agree strategic and detailed design compromise. For this process to work effectively, parties need to be able to communicate in the same 'language' as peers, rather than in an adversarial fashion, but this requires appropriately qualified and experienced staff – something that recent research shows is in increasingly short supply in LPAs across England. Similarly, while the production of character assessments, masterplans and development briefs can be led for LPAs by consultants, specialist skills and experience are required to properly interpret the design responses, as well as to provide the necessary tools and confidence to understand whether they are appropriate. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer to this shortage as fiscal restraint is likely to have to continue in LPAs for the foreseeable future.

Roll-out of characterisation as a key development tool?

- 16.13 As noted above, the penetration of detailed HLC as a tool for understanding development sites' potential and influencing design in the wider development industry is currently unclear. Although the three pilot studies appear to have been broadly successful, the fairly specialised circumstances involved in the projects' inception – along with direct involvement and investment from EH in delivering the HLC – perhaps counsel against drawing of more generalised conclusions. From wider experience, LPAs are making use of characterisation studies to contribute to the evidence base for site allocations, but there is relatively little anecdotal evidence of these techniques being applied at a site-specific level in advance of or in connection with development.
- 16.14 It would therefore be interesting to track the application of these techniques over time to determine whether they remain a principally public sector-led approach to attracting and managing development of sensitive areas, or whether developers – and mass housebuilders in particular – take on the approach.

'Setting'

- 16.15 In terms of assessment approaches, and understanding and evaluation of 'setting' continues to be one of the key missed opportunities in both avoiding impacts and adding value to proposals – although some of the projects assessed (particularly Weedon Hill) managed the issues well. Characterisation studies, that can help to establish the boundaries and significant elements of

setting (rather than simple intervisibility), are particularly helpful – but are not widely applied. Similarly, relatively few Conservation Character Appraisals deal with the setting of the CA as a whole, which can often be a key element of its special interest.

- 16.16 From our wider experience, particularly in EIA development, setting issues are often dealt with within the landscape/townscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA). While there should ideally be close cooperation and integration between LVI and historic environment assessments, there should also be clear differentiation between purely visual receptors and the heritage significance of an asset as a receptor in its own right. This helps to ensure that the correct measures of sensitivity/significance of impact are used – which is a relatively common problem in Environmental Statements. In many ways, this underlines the importance of specialist staff in LPAs as, unless this mistake is set out explicitly in Scoping Reports – examined by EH in their role as a Statutory Consultee – significant impacts could go unrecognised until the application is submitted and EH next consulted. This situation is obviously more complex for non-EIA development.

Environmental Impact Assessment

- 16.17 From the case studies involving EIA – and our experience of wider practice – there appears to be a significant issue in the way that the historic environment is considered. As alluded to above, there appears to be a significant disconnect between the holistic view advocated by EH and national planning policy and the ways in which assessments are planned, structured and executed.
- 16.18 While archaeology tends to be considered in a consistent manner, usually in line with Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) best practice, there appears to be little standardisation in terms of built heritage – especially where setting is a major issue. As noted above, this means that the assessment of effects on the historic environment as a whole can be hard to discern and are often spread across multiple chapters of the ES.

Strategic assessment

- 16.19 As noted above, the development plan process is *the* key opportunity for LPAs, consultees and communities to shape the strategic approach taken to housing and the historic environment. For at least two of the cases examined (Papworth and the recently-allocated site adjacent to the Thaxted case), robust SEA/SA approaches that were able to take cognisance of likely setting issues could have either ruled out or significantly reconfigured the allocation, to the general benefit of the historic environment. However, the fiscal realities in England's LPAs are likely to make delivering more detailed approaches a significant challenge, given the additional resources and expertise required. There may be some merit in understanding the extent to which key information (particularly characterisation and HER data) is applied in developing baseline studies and whether expert advice is sought on developing assessment methodologies in areas of high heritage value.
- 16.20 In the same vein, understanding the cumulative effects of development on the setting of assets (in this case, Quarrendon SM adjacent to the Weedon Hill MDA) at the strategic level is also potentially important, helping to identify where development would not be appropriate, as well as where it could be supported.

Masterplanning

- 16.21 While masterplanning should be a major opportunity to ensure that the character and significance of historic places are well understood and have a positive influence on detailed design, this often is not the case. The need for ambition in developing masterplans, particularly where these play an important function in raising awareness and investment in regeneration, is important. However, the New Islington example suggests the pursuit of 'iconic' design for its own sake can come at the expense of local distinctiveness. (It is of course acknowledged that the global economic crisis precipitated many of the issues that have arisen.)

Recommendations

Strategic setting research

- 16.22 Such a small sample size allows us to say little about general trends in terms of impacts being experienced as a consequence of housing development – but in general setting issues remain a significant challenge. Meeting this challenge, especially at the strategic level, is likely to require further research to assess the ‘state of the art’ in SA / SEA with regard to setting (both at the broader spatial strategy level and the more detailed site allocations level), and understanding the potential techniques available to propose a proportionate means of improving practice.
- 16.23 Recent experience indicates that EH are taking a more proactive approach in responding to scoping reports, seeking clarification with regard to assessment of impacts on setting. Nevertheless, understanding how current approaches to SEA/SA are perhaps underperforming in this regard would be very useful, particularly where any national/regional patterns could be identified with regard to inclusion or absence of this element of assessment. It is understood that many LPAs contract out SEA/SA work, and it would be useful to determine whether any relationship could be discerned between the application of more generic approaches and locally-led assessments, and any difference in outcomes. (Clearly, there are opportunities for partnership research into SEA/SA practice, working with the other statutory consultees and possibly the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment.)

Policy integration

- 16.24 A priority in relation to all the tools and techniques discussed above should be to make them ‘work harder’ for LPAs and the historic environment. The resources deployed in producing a range of studies, briefs and assessments is only justified if the products are used and can add value to development proposals. The simplest, and cheapest, means of accomplishing this is integration with local planning policies – although it is recognised that this is a cyclical opportunity with a relatively low frequency.
- 16.25 Making more extensive use of non-statutory supplementary planning documents – as many LPAs already do – may be the most effective means of addressing the lead time issue. Indeed, development plans can include suitable references to where such documents will be developed across the lifespan of the plan (with the obvious caveat that the policies in the main plan should still be capable of standing alone in order to be found sound). Particularly for Conservation Areas, where LPAs are wholly responsible for designation and protection, ensuring that robust and enforceable measures – through appraisals or management plans – are in place should be a priority especially where development pressure is high.

Human resources

- 16.26 Perhaps the key lesson from our research and recent experience is that for any design or assessment tool to be genuinely successful it needs to be supported by the availability of expert advice on the historic environment. Curatorial archaeologists and conservation officers are a vital link in the chain, providing interpretation of policy and guidance requirements, ensuring assessments and design responses are appropriate for the significance of affects assets and giving confidence to decision-makers.
- 16.27 With such a limited evidence base, it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions about the effects of resourcing in LPAs – particularly as many of the cases examined were prepared and determined prior to the effects of the economic crisis. However, it is clear that a lack of capacity will certainly impair the ability of LPAs and their partners to proactively deliver high quality studies outside of the development planning cycle. Similarly, it is unlikely that there is any capacity for third parties – such as communities or NGOs – to fill the capacity and implementation gap, given that LPA buy-in and adoption of guidance and assessment tools is critical to their success and substantial specialist knowledge is required.

Post-consent monitoring and enforcement

- 16.28 The Axwell Park case provides a salutary lesson in the need for robust monitoring and, where necessary, enforcement of planning conditions / S106 obligations critical to the delivery of

conservation gain and public benefits. While easily dismissed as an aberration, it does clearly illustrate the potential fragility of market-reliant conservation and regeneration projects. (Indeed, the New Islington masterplan was originally intended to provide a sustainable future for the Ancoats Dispensary building, but due to economic issues the developers then proposed demolition – reversing potential gains. The future of the building remains uncertain despite demolition being refused.)

- 16.29 While there is some anecdotal evidence from across the country of planning conditions and obligations going unfilled through a combination of developer bankruptcy and an inability to enforce against successors in title, the extent to which this is affecting the historic environment is unclear. What is rather better-understood is the continuing pattern of developers seeking the removal of conditions and the re-negotiation of S106 obligations / Community Infrastructure Levy contributions due to prevailing economic conditions.
- 16.30 It may therefore be useful to understand the extent to which this is affecting conservation gain secured through planning mechanisms and, where bankruptcy has been an issue, how receivers/administrators are dealing with discharging obligations. It is, however, recognised that this would be potentially contentious and difficult to implement.

