EXPANDING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EVIDENCE BASE

– Museums, Records offices, Archives and HERs

LOCUS
CONSULTING

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National Heritage Protection Plan
NHPP 5B2 Underpinning Local Planning Processes

Locus Consulting 2014

Acknowledgements

N.B. Unless stated otherwise, analysis throughout this document is undertaken and qualified according to the number of Archives, HERs, Museums and/or Neighbourhood Plan teams who responded to a questionnaire. Although 56 community groups and approximately 50% of Archives and HERs responded, only a small proportion of Museums replied. The results within this report, and the extent to which they are indicative of a national picture, should be considered with respect to the proportion of responses from local authority repositories and communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 93% of Neighbourhood Plans are engaging with the heritage of their areas, yet the uptake and use of heritage information varies from one plan to the next. The availability of information, alongside awareness of resources and understanding of its applications, is strongly influencing how communities are able to consider the historic environment in planning for their local places.

Availability & Access

There are increasingly innovative ways by which heritage information is being made publically available, especially Online. **Increasing amounts of information are being filtered and presented according to geographic location (e.g. place), making Archive, Museum and HER information accessible in mediated and integrated ways.**

ONLINE:

Communities prefer to access information online. The majority of repositories maintain an online presence with HERs typically offering the most comprehensive levels of direct Online access. As more digital information becomes available, direct access to information online is increasing, often integrating the collections of multiple resources. **Many website interfaces integrating information from multiple sources adopt a spatial 'place-based' structure.**

Websites typically provide a partial picture of collections held, and heritage information is often fragmented between multiple websites, eroding connections between information and extending research time. Websites are often technical in nature and data orientated, with interfaces aimed at professional audiences. These issues have knock-on implications, as websites are increasingly important in searching collections prior to a Remote Enquiry or Visit. **Crucially, Online access circumvents assistance** from local authority staff, the form most valued by communities undertaking Neighbourhood Plans.

REMOTE ENQUIRY:

A Remote Enquiry provides significantly more access to information compared to Online, and is the method most favoured by HERs. It presents an opportunity to open dialogue with staff, enabling higher levels of access to information accompanied by expert guidance in its interpretation and application. Typically only a selection of information is accessible by Remote Enquiry, particularly that reproducible or kept in digital format. **Key materials may not be supplied due to copyright or conservation issues, and there can be associated fees, especially for hardcopy materials.**

VISIT:

A physical Visit affords the best access to the full breadth of heritage information held by Archives, Museums and HERs, much of which is unavailable through other forms of enquiry. **However, the ability of repositories to accommodate visitors varies significantly, emphasising other methods of enquiry.** Museums employ the greatest diversity of techniques to help access and interpret exhibited information, but much less so for stored collections. Museums have the poorest research facilities, with Archives best equipped. HER facilities vary, from providing no public access, to well-equipped research rooms with dedicated staff assistance. **Opening hours vary, with Museums and Archives frequently open outside of core working hours, but HERs typically open during the working week.** 1 in 10 HERs are closed to public visitation.

A Visit provides chance to consult staff face to face, emphasised by communities and staff as the key mechanism for guiding research, assisting interpretation, and accessing the full breadth of holdings.

Community Access:

Communities clearly see Neighbourhood Plans as an opportunity to engage with the heritage of their areas, with the majority choosing to gather information about the historic environment, especially for designated heritage assets. **Whilst a high proportion of Neighbourhood Plan teams are able to access information about the historic environment of their areas, the majority are not accessing the full breadth available to them, in particular archaeology and social history.**

Many communities stressed heritage much more information could have been useful had they been aware of it. This is corroborated by Neighbourhood Plan teams with skills in heritage management accessing a much wider array of information than those without. Consequently, **there is a disparity between the aspirations of communities, the levels of heritage information accessed by them and their ability to apply it in the plan-making process.** As such, there is a risk that plans about the historic environment will be unsuccessful. **A low awareness of local authority heritage resources and their collections alongside a poor understanding of the potential applications of heritage information in Neighbourhood Planning, is affecting the access and use of information by communities.** There remains great potential and,

encouragingly, appetite for its increased use in Neighbourhood Planning.

Issues of access are compounded by a seemingly low level of expertise in heritage management within Neighbourhood Plan teams and the common use of local sources other than those held by local authorities.

Cognitive Access:

The extent to which routeways to heritage information are intellectually accessible influences its overall accessibility. Most communities stated that they were able to access and interpret heritage information, although this may be due to the accessing of a core group of familiar information. Online access is notable for its ability to facilitate cognitive access, particularly in presenting information in topical, thematic and spatial ways. Interfaces increasingly combine information from multiple sources and this appears to suit the needs of Neighbourhood Plan teams. Museums are notable for the plethora of ways by which they aid cognitive access to exhibited items.

Search criteria can be both a barrier and an aid to access, requiring a balance to be struck between the level of detail provided and the technical ability of the user. This issue is exacerbated by the use of inconsistent search criteria and terminology. Only when catalogues and other information structures include location criteria can Neighbourhood Plan teams easily search for information about their area. This is common in HERs, but less so Museums and Archives. Search results for specific places often provide a partial view of the information available.

Communities commonly require assistance in researching, and rely on local authority staff or in-house expertise, notably local history societies. This has implications for Online access where staff assistance is not available. Guidance and toolkits to aid access are provided by

local government and third sector organisations, but its availability and content varies.

Awareness:

Over 93% of Neighbourhood Plans are engaging with heritage issues. Although a wide range of heritage information is relevant to plan areas, significant amounts held by local authorities are not being accessed. Other than designated assets, awareness of heritage information held by local authorities and its potential applications in Neighbourhood Planning is varied, but generally low. Significantly fewer communities aware of their local Archive, HER or Museum, contacted them, choosing instead to gather information from other national and local sources.

Archives, HERs and Museums are losing out on the opportunity to supply information and the chance to raise awareness of the breadth of their collections. High proportions of communities said that information could have been used had they been aware of it. The low use of certain information is because their applications in plan-making are not well understood. Where available, written guidance and assistance from local and national bodies, in particular local authorities and history societies, has proved successful in increasing awareness, emphasising the value of these resources.

A greater awareness of the potential applications of heritage information in Neighbourhood Planning would assist the majority of communities. Furthermore, an understanding of types of heritage information available and where they can be accessed need to be promoted.

Use:

Findings suggest that Neighbourhood Plan teams will rarely unlock the full potential of heritage information without further assistance and guidance from external organisations.

Assistance from local societies, local planning authority staff and third sector and private organisations is commonly used and is a highly valued component of the plan-making process. Local authorities have the central role in assisting communities, emphasising the need for sufficient resources at local levels of government. The variety of stakeholders involved in Neighbourhood Planning underlines the need to maintain and build strong relationships through which heritage information and its potential applications can be promoted and achieved.

Although around three quarters of Neighbourhood Plan teams used national and/or local guidance, very little of it was heritage specific. A selective study of plans shows that, where used, it significantly encourages the access and application of heritage information. Local authority guidance is focussed on the plan-making process, and rarely engages with information and issues about the historic environment. Applications of heritage information in community-led planning are not well promoted, and greater understanding of the interdisciplinary uses of heritage information is required, particularly according to key topics addressed by Neighbourhood Plans.

National guidance and toolkits used by communities offer a mixed approach to the historic environment. There are occasional examples of specific heritage guidance, but scant advice about how to acquire heritage information, interpret it, and incorporate it into a plan. There is seldom mention of the local authority Archives, HERs or Museums, and as such communities will not be directed to the resources and the information and expertise within them.

Contents

Summary conclusions are included at the end of each Chapter to enable a rapid understanding of the project findings. In Chapter A summary conclusions are provided for Archives, HERs and Museums for each of the three methods of access.

N.B. Unless stated otherwise, analysis throughout this document is undertaken and qualified according to the number of Archives, HERs, Museums and/or Neighbourhood Plan teams responding to questionnaires. As such the proportions, percentages and other figures within the text do not precisely reflect the national picture, but are instead indicative of it.

INTRODUCTION

Aims and Objectives

In January 2013 English Heritage commissioned Locus Consulting to undertake the Expanding the Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base Project (6419), the key objectives of which were to review how:

a) Planning authorities are supporting the Neighbourhood Planning process through access to their local Historic Environment Record (HER), Museum service, local Archive and record office

b) People embarking on local place based decision making seek to understand their local places and heritage, particularly in the context of developing Neighbourhood Plans. What, if any, are the barriers they face when seeking this information?

Background

The "Heritage Counts 2010" survey identified significant opportunities for the preservation and use of heritage assets by communities through the application of the localism agenda. It showed that around 93% of adults surveyed recognise the importance of the historic environment in shaping and improving their local places. The Localism Act has provided a new opportunity for communities to engage in the planning process, and a chance to harness the value placed

This project is part of a wider strategy to improve communities' access to historic environment information by raising awareness and understanding of local heritage and its future management. This is particularly important as, since the Localism Act (2011), communities have new influential ways of participating in local place-based decision making.

on local heritage in community-led place-shaping initiatives, including Neighbourhood Plans.

Local authorities have a central role as providers of heritage information through their Archive, HER and Museum services. The National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to maintain 'up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and use it to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment' (Paragraph 169). The NPPF goes on to stress the importance of understanding the landscape character of areas (Paragraph 170). Importantly, the NPPF also requires local planning authorities to 'make information about the significance of the historic environment gathered as part of plan-making or development management publicly accessible' (Paragraph 141).

The Localism Act states that all local authorities have a duty to support and advise communities wishing to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan. Neighbourhood Plans will be scrutinised by the relevant local planning authority and subject to an independent examination, and consequently they should be based on sound evidence. 'While the evidence requirements are not as rigorous as those for a local planning authority in its plan making, the

need for evidence to underpin a Neighbourhood Plan is important.'[1]

Two years on, the "Heritage Counts 2012" survey demonstrated that the historic environment has a measurable positive effect on both the economic prosperity of an area and the well-being and happiness of people involved in that heritage. Yet the report also noted that "Since 2006 there has been a continuous decline in the number of historic environment staff employed by local authorities. By 2012 employment had fallen by over 300 full-time equivalent members of staff – a reduction of more than 25%." Although this report did not directly address the effects of such reductions on the accessibility of information to communities, it demonstrated that the Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base Project takes place against a background of significant change in the heritage sector, albeit amidst a period of growing opportunity for public involvement in local place-making.

Neighbourhood Planning

National planning policy emphasises the role communities should have in shaping their local areas. The Localism Act (2012) enables community groups to produce Neighbourhood Plans, encouraging

local people to play a more direct role in the planning process, including the ability to grant outline planning permission for certain types of development. Other community-led plans, such as Village Design Statements and Parish Plans, have been undertaken since long before the Localism Act, and these continue to enable local people to have a say in the development of their places.

Neighbourhood Plans are a relatively recent development and are currently being undertaken in over 800 locations in over half of all the local planning authorities in England. Over 630 Neighbourhood Plan areas have been designated, 54 draft plans published, 25 plans submitted to examination, 9 passed examination, 6 plans passed referendum and 4 plans in force[2]. Their increasing uptake promotes them as an opportunity for communities to use heritage information to influence the development of their areas, and to ensure that heritage assets are protected and valued in future decision making. This study shows that such plans directly engage with issues concerned with the historic environment, including the inherited character of places, the design of new development, and the location and form of larger developments.

Neighbourhood Plans are expected to be "in general conformity[3]" with Local Plan policies, including those concerning the historic environment. Neighbourhood Plan teams need to take an evidence-led approach to setting out their plans, accounting for and building on existing historic environment polices. Through Neighbourhood Plans, there remains extensive scope for specific local agendas to be set out, including those about key elements of the historic environment, highlighting the need for relevant heritage

information to be accessible to local communities in ways that can it be applied in the plan-making process.

In areas where no local plan exists, there is greater scope for communities to set their own policies with respect to the historic environment, as long as such policies are in conformity with those contained in the NPPF, and with national legislation regarding listed buildings, scheduled monuments and other designated heritage assets.

The Role of Heritage in the Localism Agenda

Neighbourhood Planning is about people and the future of the places in which they live. An understanding of the character of an area, informed by heritage information, can ensure that future change and development makes a positive and effective contribution to an existing place. Knowledge of archaeological potential can show where new developments might most appropriately be sited, or an understanding of the built character can help guide future development. In the case of Neighbourhood Plans, heritage information can help inform the initial definition of a plan area, especially in un-parished areas. In such cases a "place" could be defined according to unifying elements such as historic development, settlement character and building design, all of which can be derived from heritage information.

In order to be of use, heritage information must be provided in ways that are accessible to a non-professional audience. This project has assessed the different sources of information available,

their interrelationships, and the ways in which community groups have used, or are intending to use, heritage information in their plans. This analysis enables a picture to be developed of the current relationships between the providers and users of information, and will help to target and inform how the different sources of information can be best provided to enable full consideration of the historic environment in Neighbourhood Planning.

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[1] http://www.pas.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning/-/journal_content/56/332612/3614484/ARTICLE

[2] NOTES ON #neighbourhoodplanning, December 2013 Edition https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/264655/Notes_on_NP_8.pdf

[3] National Planning Policy Framework

APPROACH

Methodology

The project methodology followed a four staged approach:

A. **Review of available data and information**

B. **Questionnaires to local authorities and community groups**

C. **Analysis**

D. **Consultation and reporting**

A. Review of available data and information

This stage sought to understand current knowledge of information holdings and provision at the local authority level. A number of research projects of this nature have been undertaken by English Heritage, the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO), the National Archive, and other bodies. These were studied both for their findings and to provide direction for the consultation of local authorities in Stage B.

The second part of the review looked at a range of community-led plans being undertaken, the guidance available for their production, and some of the organisations that provide assistance to local groups. Although a number of different types of plan were identified it was felt that Neighbourhood Plans, with around 450 ongoing at the time of the study, provided a sufficiently large group for consultation.

The findings of the review stage formed the basis for understanding the types of information held by Archives, HERs and Museums and the guidance available for its use in Neighbourhood Planning. In turn, this informed the drafting of the questionnaires to both local authorities and Neighbourhood Plan Teams. The review is included as part of the project archive, available from the Archaeology Data Service.

B. Questionnaires to local authorities and communities

This part of the project was designed according to two main phases of data collection. The first assessed the types, availability and accessibility of heritage information held by local authority Archives, Historic Environment Records (HERs) and Museums. A second group of questionnaires, sent to all communities producing a Neighbourhood Plan, provided information on whether or not they accessed heritage information and, if so, how they were able to obtain it and use it in their plans.

Local Authority Questionnaires

Format

The local authority consultation gathered information from three key local authority services:

1. **Historic Environment Record (HER) offices**, which are typically concerned with collating information about the physical historic environment such as archaeology and built heritage

2. **Archives and Local Studies Libraries**, which preserve and maintain historic records and documentary heritage, and provide public access to them

3. **Museums**, which provide direct public access to a wide range tangible historic objects and documents.

In order to facilitate cross analysis of the holdings of the three repositories, the questionnaires were designed according to a number of broadly comparable themes:

- Types of heritage information held about local places
- Structures and formats in which information is held
- Different formats in which information is presented and provided
- Standing guidance supporting the access and use of information
- Community-led plans and initiatives recently undertaken or ongoing in the area
- Resources made available for non-professional enquiries

The full details of the questions asked and the results of the questionnaires are described in an Interim Report as part of the project archive, available from the Archaeology Data Service.

Distribution

For HERs, a list of contacts was gathered from the Heritage Gateway website. For Archives, a list was provided by a contact at the National Archive and supplemented by the Archon website. Contact with local authority Museums was facilitated by the Arts Council, who were unable to provide a list due to data protection issues. Instead, the Museum questionnaire was kindly distributed by the Arts Council.

Guidance on how to complete each section of the questionnaire was included within email correspondence. Named contacts were identified where possible for Archives and HERs and were contacted by telephone in order to maximise responses. This was not undertaken for Museums due to the lack of a distribution list; however a second e-mail was distributed by the Arts Council to encourage responses.

A total of 126 responses were received across all three types of local authority repository. These included:

Repository	Total contacted	Number of Responses	% Returned	Partially complete
Archive	129	55	43%	
HER	84	48	57%	2
Museum	455*	23	5%	

* estimated

Responses

Both HERs and Archives responded in sufficient numbers to provide a representative sample of each type of repository. Responses to the questionnaire by Museums was comparatively poor, with only 5% of those canvassed responding. Given the high response from Archives and HERs this may be a consequence of the indirect communication between Locus Consulting and individual museums. Consequently the results of extrapolating the survey findings at a national level are indicative only.

Community Questionnaires

The community questionnaire was designed to identify the aims of each Neighbourhood Plan, the different types and sources of heritage information accessed, and any guidance and assistance used. The responses, together with the results of the local authority questionnaires, enabled analysis of both the levels of access of data available to communities and its subsequent use in their plans.

Format

The majority of questions were multiple choice to help standardise responses where possible, and to enable analysis at later stages. A limited number of questions allowed for free text responses.

Questionnaires were structured into three sections:

1. **Background** – The first section provided an understanding of the spatial extent and broad landscape character of a plan's area, including key land uses. These results provided a basic understanding of how an area was defined and what types of heritage information might be relevant to it

2. **Aims and Information** – This section investigated the principal aims of Neighbourhood Plans and what types of heritage information were or were not used in preparing them. The section also investigated the typical sources of information and the experiences of the plan-teams in accessing and interpreting it

3. **Involvement** – The final section looked at the type of skills amongst people directly involved in producing the plan, as well as the nature of any assistance or guidance they received from local authorities, commercial and not-for-profit organisations.

Distribution

An initial distribution list was identified using an 'up-to-date' list of Neighbourhood Plans sourced at www.planningresource.co.uk. Through a process of research and correspondence with local authorities, approximately 450 named contacts and email addresses were identified. These were usually the clerk of the respective parish council, however contact addresses included a wide range of people from local councillors, local authority staff, and community groups. Questionnaires were circulated to any community in the process of undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan, although some communities were in early discussion stages.

Responses

A total of 56 responses were received. All questionnaires were generally comprehensively completed, although for some multiple choice questions answers were left partially blank or not marked. Correspondence with several of the communities showed that the questionnaires were passed around the Neighbourhood Plan Teams to ensure that they were answered by the appropriate person. The results were entered into a Geographical Information System (GIS), and the map (left) shows that responses were received from communities across much of England.

C. Analysis

Qualifying the analysis

Inevitably, local authority questionnaire responses reflected the individual circumstances of Archives, HERs and Museums, in particular the resources available to them to provide, maintain and present heritage information. Analysis did not consider factors influencing the individual circumstances of local authorities or the effectiveness of their service provision, and as such they must be counted amongst the variables that influenced responses given by Archives, HERs and Museums.

Similarly, a number of factors influenced responses from local communities. These included, but were not limited to the aims and objectives of their plan, the nature of their local area and their awareness of heritage issues. Where possible, community questionnaire responses were gauged against external evidence-bases, which provided a more localised understanding of the responses given (e.g. if no information for listed buildings was accessed the plan area was checked to see if any such designated assets exist).

Above all, analysis was undertaken from the perspective of communities, rather than that of the heritage professionals or local authority officers that supplied it. The report provides an overview of the resources typically available for the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan, the ways in which access to those resources is facilitated, and the experience of the community teams in accessing and applying the information for the purpose of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Throughout, care has been taken to ensure that the analyses are based on valid hypotheses and that questionnaire data has been compared fairly.

N.B. Unless stated otherwise, analysis throughout this document is undertaken and qualified according to the number of Archives, HERs, Museums and/or Neighbourhood Plan teams responding to questionnaires. As such the proportions, percentages and other figures within the text do not precisely reflect the national picture, but are instead indicative of it.

Techniques

Interim Reports

Results and analysis of the questionnaires were incorporated in two interim reports; a local authority report and a community report. These included statistical analysis and discussion of responses in greater detail than this report, and are available as part of the project archive from the Archaeology Data Service.

Cross Analysis of Questionnaire results

Cross analysis of responses from each type of local authority repository was undertaken in order to identify areas of common provision, format and types of heritage information. Further cross analysis was also undertaken using the responses from local authorities and those from communities, in order to consider issues between the supply of data and the demand for it from Neighbourhood Plan teams.
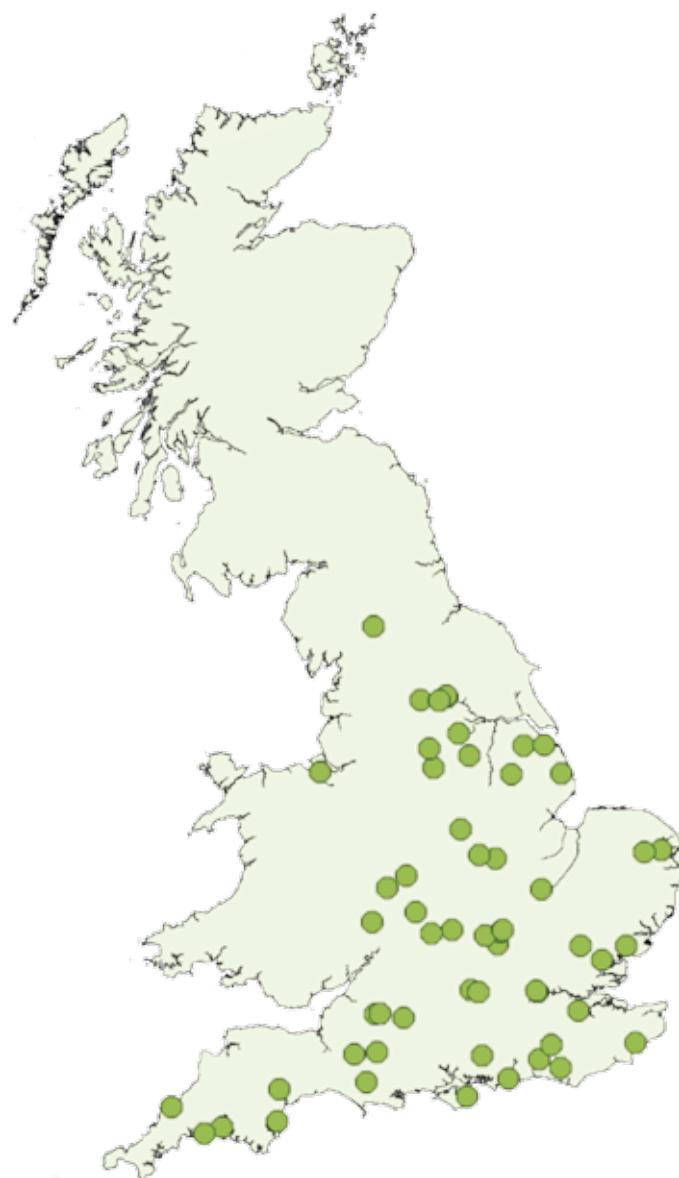

Figure 1: Map of responses from Neighbourhood Plan Teams

Structure of Analysis

The overall analysis was undertaken according to the following key study areas:

Access

Analysis of the physical accessibility of information, the extent to which communities can tangibly access information, was structured according to three key mechanisms; Online research, a Remote Enquiry to the repository, and a Visit to the repository in person. Cognitive access was also considered, investigating the extent to which routeways to heritage information were intellectually accessible as these routeways will inevitably influence communities' ability to access, interpret and apply it in the plan-making process.

Awareness

The second part of analysis considered communities' awareness of local authority repositories and the heritage information they hold. This was considered key, as it is essential that communities should have an awareness of the information available to them and should be motivated by its potential applications.

Use

Given an adequate knowledge of the sources available and sufficient access to them through local authorities, the questions remain of whether information is used in the preparation of a plan and, if so, in what ways. Analysis sought to gain an appreciation of these issues by considering the involvement of local authority repositories Neighbourhood Planning in their areas and by asking local communities about the use and perceived relevance of heritage information in plan-making.

D. Consultation & reporting

Stakeholder Consultation

As part of the questionnaire, communities were asked to identify any organisations that assisted them. A number of communities were consulted about their experiences, strengthening understanding of the types of assistance provided and some of the key conclusions arising from the analysis of questionnaire results.

Case Studies

A series of more detailed case studies was identified to illustrate the ways in which communities are accessed, interpreted and applied heritage information in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Among the responses to the questionnaires there were a number of geographical cross-overs between those from local authorities and those from communities, which form the basis of several in-depth case studies in the report. Examples of particularly interesting or illustrative methods of making information available have also been highlighted as case studies, including examples where there was no corresponding response from a community team.

Validation

In certain cases, the results of community questionnaires were validated against available evidence-bases (e.g. national designations) and published plan documents. Where particular issues of access, awareness or use were encountered which required deeper investigation than allowed by the responses, a further series of informal telephone and e-mail consultations was undertaken.

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

This part of the report is structured according to five key chapters that together investigate some of the key issues concerning the ability of Neighbourhood Plan Teams to access, interpret and apply heritage information in the plan-making process.

Chapter A - Physical Access

Ensuring that heritage information is both available and accessible to communities is fundamental to its uptake and use for the purposes of any local initiative. This Chapter looks at the broad patterns of public accessibility to information held by Archives, HERs and Museums, as opposed to any localised variations. It seeks to identify any common barriers to accessibility, alongside any examples of good practice that facilitated the accessing of heritage information about local places by local people. This Chapter is structured according to the three key methods of physical access; Online, Remote Enquiry, and Visit.

Chapter B - Heritage Information Accessed By Communities

This Chapter examines what types and topics of information were accessed by Neighbourhood Plan Teams and what potential exists for communities to access more information. The Chapter also considers the routes by which communities accessed heritage information about their plan areas.

Chapter C - Cognitive Access

This Chapter considers 'Cognitive Access' to heritage information, investigating to what extent it is configured in ways that it can be used by local teams with the expertise available to them. The issues of the availability and accessibility of information are investigated from two perspectives; from that of the information providers and from the user. It considers the ways in which information is interpreted and mediated by repositories in order to make it more approachable to a non-professional audience.

Chapter D - Awareness

This Chapter considers the extent to which communities were aware that repositories are able to provide information, were able to choose information relevant to their needs, and were able to select the appropriate evidence-bases to inform their plans.

Chapter E - Use

The ways and routes by which communities applied heritage information in the process of creating Neighbourhood Plans are investigated. A series of case studies are used to highlight particular approaches taken by communities.

Brief overviews of the information held by Archives, HERs and Museums are provided at the start of this part of the report. Comprehensive descriptions of information held by each of the repositories and methods by which information is made available by them are described in an Interim Report as part of the project archive, available from the Archaeology Data Service.

ARCHIVES

Summary of holdings

Archives appear to have the most consistent holdings across each of the three repositories included in the survey. Members of the public can expect to find information about Buildings & Architecture, Industry & Commerce, Landscape & Settlement and Social History at the vast majority of Archives. Information regarding Archaeology appears to be rarely held by any of the Archives who responded.

High proportions of Archives hold demographic information ranging from manorial surveys to electoral registers and directories, providing insight into the Social History of local areas. High proportions of Archives also hold historic maps, including editions of Ordnance Survey (OS) maps (95% of Archives), as well as older maps including Tithe (84%) and Enclosure (73%). These resources may help communities to understand the development of their Landscape & Settlement over the past two centuries or more. However, notably fewer Archives (42%) hold modern OS mapping. 89% of Archives hold architectural drawings, with around 70% holding planning applications and building control plans, providing communities with a source of information about the Architecture and Building heritage of their areas. Bibliographic information, alongside images and other media, are held by nearly all Archives, and where accessible they are likely to provide researchers with information across all five 'information topics' depending on their individual content.

Information Formats

The vast majority of Archives hold information in hardcopy format, most often as the original document or as photocopies. Fewer types of information including electoral registers, diocesan archives and wills are held in other formats such as microfiche/microfilm or digital image files. All other remaining information types are typically held in hardcopy format. The mixture of hardcopy and digital formats has implications for the availability of information online or remotely.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORDS

Summary of holdings

The vast majority of communities can expect to find information about Archaeology, Buildings & Architecture (including Industry & Commerce) and Landscape & Settlement at their local HER. Information for Archaeology and designated heritage assets is typically comprehensively held across a local authority area, whereas other non-designated features (e.g. buildings, military infrastructure, transport) are held more partially, potentially reducing the availability of this type of information to some local communities. Of note is that locally designated assets, which typically include buildings and architectural features, are only held by approximately two thirds of HERs. Historic and modern OS mapping and aerial photography are also held by almost all HERs, and this, coupled with characterisation information, which is held by 87% of HERs, potentially provides communities with considerable information about the historical development of an area, in particular that concerning Landscape & Settlement and Industry & Commerce. Bibliographic information, alongside images and other media are held by nearly all HERs, and where accessible they are likely to provide researchers with information across all five 'information topics' depending on their individual content. In particular, archaeological 'grey-literature' reports are held by high numbers of HERs.

Overall, there appears to be a core group of information types held by the vast majority of HERs, mainly concerned with monuments, designations, OS mapping and characterisation. Outside of this group, information coverage is either more patchy and/or held by between 30-70% of HERs, meaning that these types of information will be unavailable for many communities. If held, information about the Social History of an area is likely to be held both within bibliographic holdings and as images.

Information Formats

Monument, designation, characterisation and mapped information are typically held in a GIS with accompanying digital or hardcopy written information, but rarely images. Written text and report information tends towards digital formats, although substantial numbers of HERs hold information in hardcopy format, especially bibliographic, images and other media collections.

MUSEUMS

Summary of Holdings

Information held by Museums varies considerably amongst those who returned questionnaires. The majority of Museums hold information about their local authority area in the wider sense, with a handful focussing instead on a single building within it or a local person of national importance. Roughly half of Museums are also topic based, focussing on a specific subject about an area's history, such as industry, while fewer Museums (c.26%) are organised according to a particular period. At this broad level of analysis, the results indicate that communities wishing to research the historic environment of their local area may need to visit one or more Museums depending on any topic, area or that they wish to focus their research on.

The vast majority of Museums (70%) hold information across all five information topics included in the survey, with information about Archaeology held by the lowest proportion of Museums (70%). Museum holdings most commonly include information about Social History and Architecture & Buildings, with Landscape & Settlement being the least represented topic after Archaeology.

Format of information

Museums hold information in a much wider range of material formats than Archives and HERs. There is some modest variation in the specific types of materials held according to each topic of information, with some types favouring objects (e.g. Archaeology), and others documentary records (e.g. Buildings & Architecture). Overall, Museums have a strong emphasis on physical objects such as artefacts, with the exception of information about 'Buildings & Architecture'. Other common formats include documentary and drawn materials and artwork. As with HERs and Archives, Museums place emphasis on documentary sources, although only 59% of them provide access to a library, meaning that much of the information is for exhibition or may be available for purchase. Audio-visual materials are rarely held, except for Social History and Industry & Commerce.

CHAPTER A: PHYSICAL ACCESS

The process by which local authority Archives, HERs and Museums make heritage information physically available is influenced by a wide range of factors, not least the formats in which information is held, the resources available to local authorities and the complexity of its content. Moreover, the awareness, abilities, motivations and resources of members of the public are determining factors in whether or not heritage information is sought and accessed.

Methods of making information accessible are constantly evolving, partly in response to technological innovation as well as through significant investment into the digitisation of information held in 'hardcopy' formats.

Using the results of the local authority questionnaires, this Chapter investigates the levels of availability of information held by Archives, HERs and Museums, considering some of the common and standout techniques of making information publically accessible. Analysis was structured according to three fundamental methods by which communities can access information: Online, Remote Enquiry and Visit. The understanding gained was used to inform the analysis of questionnaire responses from Neighbourhood Plan teams about the sources and types of information accessed for the purposes of preparing their plans.
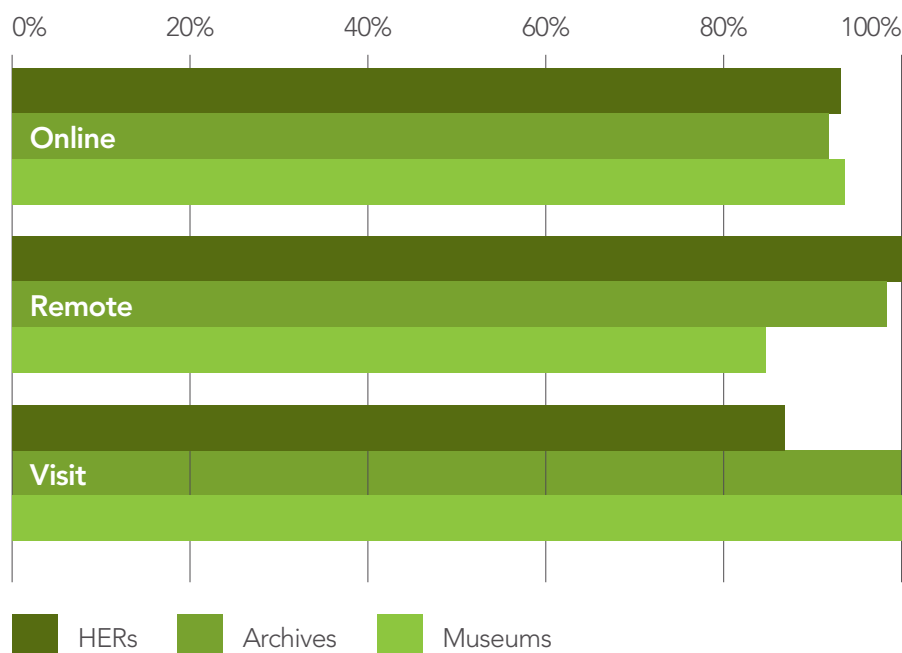

Figure 2: Levels of availability of Archives, Museums and HERs according to method of access

A1. Methods of making information available

At the broad scale, responses from local authorities showed high levels of consistency in the broad mechanisms used to make information available, with over 87% of repositories providing access Online, by Remote Enquiry and/or by Visit. Heritage information is clearly being made accessible in some way by all local authority repositories, with 100% of HERs choosing to make information accessible by Remote Enquiry, and the same proportion of Museums and Archives opening their doors to the visiting public. However, there appears to be slight variations in approach between each of the three types of resource, notably with 1 in 10 HERs closed to public visitation and 13% of Museums unable to provide information via Remote Enquiry. Archives appear to have the most consistently high levels of access across the three methods of making information available. In a handful of instances, these variances may have some localised implications for communities trying to access heritage information, but overall, **members of the public in any given area are likely to have a number of options for accessing information.**

N.B. Statistics throughout this report do not reflect the proportion of Archives, Museums or HERs holding specific types of heritage information, but whether types of information, if held, are made accessible or not. A full breakdown analysis of the types of heritage information held by the three repositories and the levels of accessibility to them is provided in the first of two interim reports, available as part of the project archive from the Archaeology Data Service.

A2. How types of information are available

This Section considers the levels of access afforded to heritage information held by local authorities according to the three main methods: Online, Remote Enquiry and Visit. Given the varied approaches to providing Online access to information, this method of access is afforded additional focus.

A2.1 Online Access

ARCHIVES

93% of Archives responding to the questionnaire indicated that they maintain some form of online presence. Despite this, direct access to Archive holdings is low across all information types, with websites mainly consisting of descriptive information about collections and services, as opposed to providing direct access to digitally archived material itself.

Information Type	Access
Maps	0-19%
Lists & Registers	4-13%
Records	0-18%
Wills, Probate & Deeds	2-11%
Plans	0-6%
Images & Media	8-37%

A review of websites showed that the most popular collections, such as directories, are catalogued and available to search online. It should be noted that in many cases Archive holdings are not fully catalogued, meaning that online searches may only give a partial picture of the full extent of available material. Catalogues are all available to be searched by free text entry initially,

followed by advanced criteria (see box right). For a small number of websites users are also able to filter information by criteria such as 'People', 'Topics', 'Material' and 'Places'. **Where it is possible to search by 'Place', communities are able to access a package of information, often with a level of interpretation, specific to their local areas.** These packages provide immediately accessible information for communities, and may raise their potential use in Neighbourhood Planning (See Case Study 2 and Chapter B: Cognitive Access).

Images and media are the most directly accessible information types online, which may reflect the prevalence of born-digital materials and the results of digitisation projects. Materials commonly include historic photographs, and to a lesser extent scans of maps, documents and images of artefacts. Very few local authority websites provide direct access to lists, registers and other demographic records, as these are typically available through 3rd party commercial websites (e.g. www.ancestry.co.uk).

Where it exists, direct access to information is mainly through catalogue style search interfaces, although map-based systems, such as http://blackcountryhistory.org/map/, appear to be increasingly used. The ability to map and present information spatially online is helpful in providing integrated access to Museum, Library, Archive and HER holdings (see Case Study 1).

Archive websites are hosted in a variety of ways and structures. Local authority web pages are generally relatively straightforward in style and content, with basic information about Archive services and an online search of a select number of catalogues. Standardisation is often apparent as several authorities use common search interfaces provided by the same website developer.

However, a number of local authority websites, often hosted as a sub-site, are providing very detailed levels of access to heritage information (e.g. http://history.wiltshire.gov.uk, www.worcestershire.gov.uk/waas, and www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/leisure/archives). Furthermore, **many websites provide combined access to heritage information held by other repositories**, including local studies libraries, Museums, district Archives, and in rarer instances Historic Environment Records.

More geographically disparate resources are also brought together under common topics such as http://www.portcities.org.uk/ which hosts information about the maritime histories of UK port cities. Where information from multiple repositories is mapped, there are clear advantages as the user is able to review and analyse relevant holdings according to location, topic, period and people, as seen by Case Study 1.

3rd party websites, including some commercial sites, were frequently referred to, such as www.ancestry.co.uk and www.familysearch.org. These tend to be focussed on genealogy, and provide extensive access to many records. Many Archives are able to provide free on-site access to these otherwise 'paid resources'. Access to proportions of Archive holdings are also commonly achieved through signposting to national resources e.g. www.historicaldirectories.org and www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

CASE STUDY 1:

Black Country History

Black Country History is a searchable website which allows users to find and view information about documents, maps, photographs, art works, objects and other materials held by Archives, HER and Museums services within the Black Country. The eight partners involved in this website are:

- Dudley Archives and Local History Service
- Dudley Museums Service
- Sandwell Museums Service
- Sandwell Community History and Archives Service
- Walsall Local History Centre
- Walsall Museums Service
- Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies
- Wolverhampton Arts and Museums Service
- Wolverhampton and Walsall HER

Accessible information includes HER event and monument data alongside images and other information from local history, Museum and Archive services. Historic map layers can also be loaded as a series of base maps to provide a historic landscape context. Information available on the map interface is only a selection of collections held, and greater amounts of information can be accessed using (non-mapped) search interfaces on the website.

Collections are displayed on an interactive map, helping to group different sources of information together geographically. For example, West Park (top centre left of the map) has an HER record associated with it in purple and a number of historic images and paintings available from Archive and Museum services. Information on the map is searchable via a free text box, and more detailed information for each record or image is provided via a hyperlink accessed via a pop-up box for each item on the map (see http://blackcountryhistory.org/map/).

Considerations for community access to Archive Information

- Almost all Archives appear to maintain an online presence, enabling the public to arrange access via a Remote Enquiry or Visit

- High proportions of Archives make their digital catalogues accessible online, enabling c.90% of communities to search for (but not directly access) information via the internet

- With the exception of digital images and demographic information through paid commercial sites, members of the public are unlikely to be able to directly access information held by Archives online, meaning research will need to be supplemented by another form of enquiry

- There is a risk that useful information may be overlooked or missed by communities searching online, as not all Archive collections are catalogued and not all catalogues are digitised

- Archive information is not commonly catalogued by its precise location (e.g. Co-ordinates). Although it is often possible to use location-based terms in free text searches (e.g. street name or village), this is likely to return a partial view of the information held. The lack of location metadata prevents some Archive information from being mapped, notably on website interfaces which are assimilating data from multiple sources and presenting it on digital maps

- With the necessary resources, there is high potential to make more Archive information available online. Useful innovative precedents are being set by pioneering local authorities, some of whom are using common online interfaces, in making certain types of information, such as images and drawings, available online

- Filters of information according to specific topics, in particular 'local places' (typically administrative and other local areas), provide increased levels of access alongside an element of analysis and interpretation. Where available, these may provide a useful resource and starting point for communities wishing to research the historic environment of their local area

- Archive collections available or searchable online are often split between two or more websites, meaning that members of the public may need to divide their research between several national, commercial and/or local web-resources

- There are a growing number of websites providing integrated access to Archive, Library, Museum catalogues and/or HER information. These resources are likely to enable communities to cross analyse information from multiple sources by providing a single point for research.

HERs

Overall, there are high levels of direct online access to a select group of information held by HERs, in particular archaeological information and nationally designated heritage assets. However, the methods by which information is accessed are varied, both according to each type of heritage information and the individual local authority. Furthermore, HERs often provide information through two or more websites. This presents communities with the challenge of navigating different search interfaces and web resources in order to access information for their areas.

The most common method of providing access to information is through local authority web pages, which vary widely in content. The most basic offerings include a series of linked web pages with informative text, frequently accompanied by downloadable .pdf reports, while more advanced sites provide searchable online databases and interactive maps displaying information.

A number of local authorities have developed sub-sites or standalone web interfaces (e.g. **www. keystothepast.info**), a growing number of which provide HER information integrated alongside Archive and Museum resources (e.g.

Information Type	Access
Monuments	73-77%
Designations	45-71%
Character	21-38%
Maps	3-17%
Images and Media	5-12%
Bibliographic	8-13%

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ heritagesearch and Case Study 1). The use of 3rd party websites is limited to the Heritage Gateway, although the use of common website content management systems and

[4]N.B. The website states clearly that 'the information contained on this website is not suitable for use in the planning process and commercial contractors must contact the Historic Environment Record directly for appropriate data.' (Date of Access 18/09/2013).

interfaces, such as those developed by OrangeLeaf, are promoting a higher level of consistency amongst many HERs.

Information directly available Online appears to be biased towards 'monument' data held by local authority HERs, most evidently seen in the Heritage Gateway. This information typically includes the majority of designated and undesignated heritage assets (e.g. buildings, archaeology, parks and gardens). There is some inconsistency in terms of the content of information and the criteria by which it can be searched. Common search criteria are listed in the table to the right, however 'designation status' is available for fewer HERs (e.g. **www.heritage. norfolk.gov.uk**[4]), and occasionally only includes a selection of local and/ or national designations (e.g. **http:// history.wiltshire.gov.uk/smr**).

Other forms of information typically held by HERs, such Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) data, Extensive Urban Surveys, historic maps and photographs, are much less accessible online, as indicated by the questionnaire results (see 'Information Type' table above). **This was emphasised by almost all HERs, who stressed the partial nature of information available online and that the full extent of resources can only be accessed by Visit or Remote Enquiry.** Where these 'less-favoured' types of information are available, they are typically in the form of downloadable images or reports for a county area, and/or occasionally subdivisions within it (e.g. parish/ district/character area). However, a small number of local authorities provide partial access to information on digital maps, such as the Cornwall website (see **http://mapping. cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap**), where the broad level HLC type mapping is mapped and the records hyperlinked to a .pdf report.

Historic mapping is typically available in the form of images, occasionally for specific administrative areas of the local authority area, and very rarely as a GIS style interface of map

layers (e.g. **http://mydistrict. chichester.gov.uk**). Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping is comparatively less available than other maps such as Tithe and Enclosure Award maps and those by historic cartographers. **Bristol's 'Know your Place' website is notable for its exceptional approach in providing this functionality for OS and other historic maps** (see **http://maps. bristol.gov.uk/knowyourplace**), as well as the ability to undertake map regression using a 'spyglass' function to compare two maps.

Where information is digitally mapped, either as points on a map or as a base-layer for mapping, it is typically available as a series of layers arranged in a GIS style interface. Historic environment data may be presented on its own dedicated mapping interface (e.g. Bristol), but frequently information is provided on digital map interfaces that display a variety of council services, as seen in the example of Cornwall below. Although this may increase the complexity of the interface for the user it also provides a greater understanding of the location of information, and the ability to draw links between the historic environment and a wide variety of other spatially referenced information.
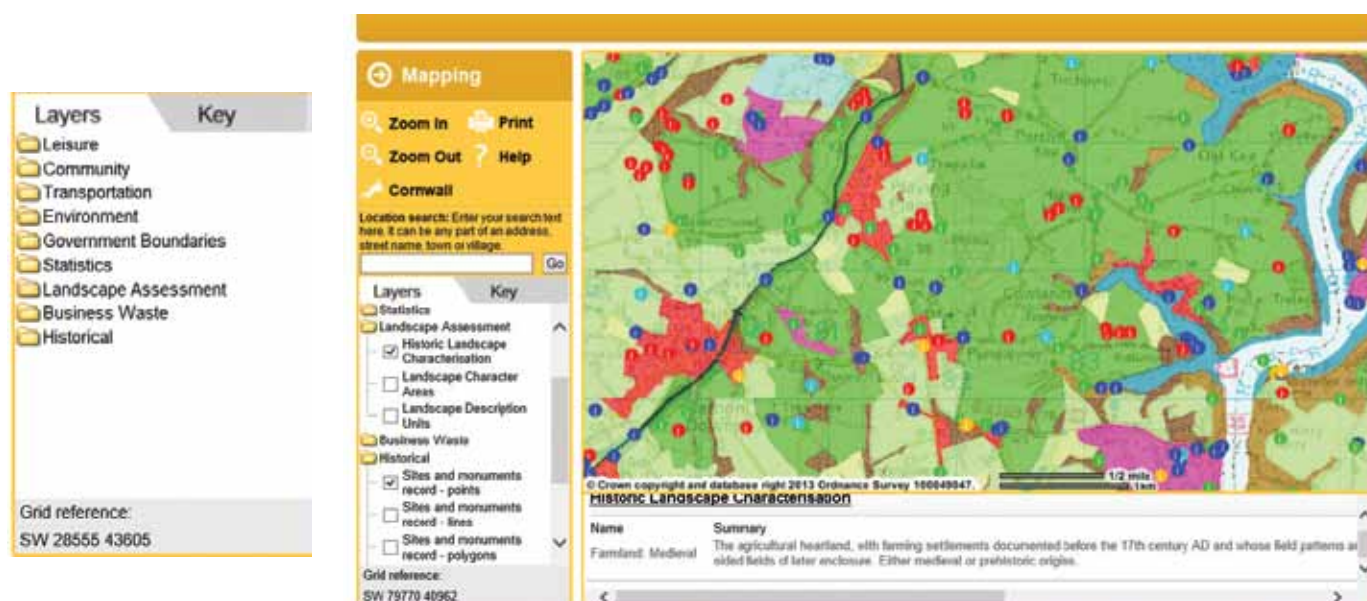

Figure 3: Historic environment information displayed in a GIS style interface with multiple layers of infomation about other council services and landscape features in Cornwall

Wiltshire Community Histories

Wiltshire Council makes settlement histories for 261 communities in their local authority area available online.

These pages provide a significant resource to communities, and include scans of historic maps, a "thumbnail history" of the settlement, and contact details for council offices. There is also an image search facility which provides a number of both modern and old photographs.

The histories also provide links to useful sources, such as pre-defined searches of written materials about each community, links to old newspapers, the relevant Victoria County History volume for the settlement, and references for historic Ordnance Survey maps. Other resources include 'Folk arts' with links to relevant songs and stories, 'Local Authors', 'Literary Associations' and a 'History of Buildings' in the settlement, including a list of listed buildings.

A notable feature of these pages is the link to the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record, which opens a page with a pre-prepared search of the HER. This is presented as a list of monuments and buildings, which can then be further filtered by the user. As

well as the HER, the page also has hyperlinks and basic pointers on how to search the Wiltshire Studies catalogue, Community Information Database, Wiltshire & Swindon Archives, and the Wiltshire & Swindon Record Office, enabling the user to get a preliminary understanding of the resources available before making a direct enquiry.

The sustainability appraisal of the Neighbourhood Plan for Sherston in Wiltshire has taken into account a number of historic features described in their community history page. The Chairman of the Sherston team said that their Community History report, along with subsequent support from the local authority, served as a key starting point for the plan's consideration of heritage matters. (**http://history.wiltshire. gov.uk/community/getcom2. php?id=201**).

The plan considers scheduled ancient monuments in the parish, conservation areas and listed buildings, and goes on to state that, both for built heritage and archaeological material, "national designation and assessments provide a sound level of protection that could be further enhanced through Neighbourhood Plan policies."

The case study shows the ability and potential benefits of assimilating a plethora of information and resources about various elements of the historic environment together for use by communities. The 'Community Histories' also provide the opportunity to provide mediated and interpreted information alongside 'data', as well as some simple pointers to encourage and help communities research more widely about their heritage.

In order to provide more structured access websites commonly have information according to key topics, themes, periods and places. This approach, similar to that taken by many Archives and Museums, enables the pooling of information amongst the three repositories. Information provided according to place, often by parish or settlement, is a common structure, and can contain short written histories of an area (e.g. **http://unlockingessex. essexcc.gov.uk**), detailed data extracted from the HER (e.g. listed buildings, SAMs and archaeological sites), and other materials such as maps, images and written reports (e.g. **http://history.wiltshire.gov. uk/community**). In some instances parish files have direct links to place-based information on third party websites such as Wikipedia.

The 'place' based structure is also apparent within some map interfaces, such as **www. heritageconnectlincoln.com**, where heritage information is provided according to 136 areas that seamlessly cover the entire city and its hinterland. Peterborough's 'Hawkeye' website also allows information to be searched for a bespoke area drawn freehand on an interactive map. This latter facility has considerable benefits for Neighbourhood Plan teams, particularly those in urban areas, whose plans do not conform to predefined political boundaries (see **http://hawkeye.peterborough.gov. uk/hawkeye**).

The local place-based structure seems particularly prevalent in the provision of heritage information to communities, with several termed 'Community Histories' or 'Local Histories'. As with Archives, it appears that they are able to provide relevant information and a level of interpretation that renders them more useful to the general public as opposed to professional users of HER information alone.

In fulfilling two roles, as both a statutory repository for planning purposes and a community access point for heritage information, HERs use a plethora of techniques and web interfaces to make the information they hold accessible. Consequently, historic environment information frequently appears to be fragmented between one or more websites or sub-sites and occasionally within individual local authority websites.

The issue appears to be most prevalent in two-tier authorities where the two distinct roles are provided by two different levels of local government. Here, information about archaeology may be held at county level as archaeological advice may be provided at this level, but information about listed buildings and conservation areas may be held at district level (e.g. **http://www. eastsussex.gov.uk/environment**). However the problem also exists in local authorities with unitary or similar status, as the provision of heritage information is often divided between two seemingly unrelated parts of websites (see Case Study 3).

The fragmented provision of heritage data is also reflected in the structure of some interactive layers on mapped websites, where heritage information is divided between two or more categories such as 'Historic Environment', 'Planning', 'Conservation' and 'Environment' (e.g. **http://ww2.westberks.gov. uk/InternetMapping/Map.aspx** and Figure 3 on Page 25).

CASE STUDY 3:

Fragmented accessibility to heritage information

Through its main website, the City of Lincoln Council provides some basic forms of access to heritage information held by its comprehensive Heritage Database. These include downloadable .pdf lists and maps of designated heritage assets, walkable tours hosted on Google Maps, key monument summaries and a wealth of other information. However, access to heritage information is divided between two different parts of the council's website alongside a further subsite **www.heritageconnectlincoln.com**.

Information about the Heritage Database and the archaeological information within it is hosted within the 'Visitor and Leisure' area of the website (see Navigation Bar A below).

Navigation Bar A
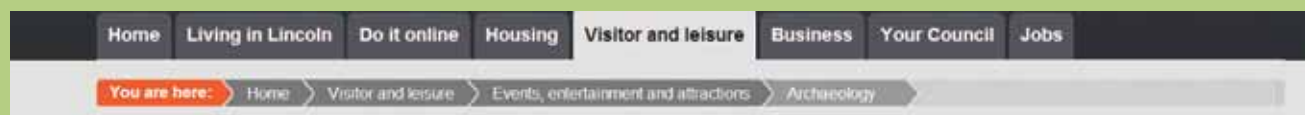
However, information about designated historic assets is located in the 'Living in Lincoln' area of the website, on pages concerning 'Preserving heritage buildings and areas' (see Navigation Bar B below).

Navigation Bar B
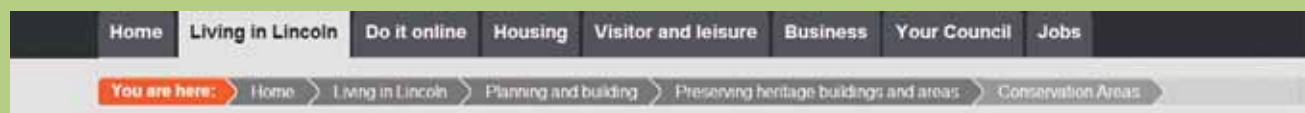
'Archaeology and Planning' pages remain in the 'Visitor and Leisure' pages and consequently, heritage information, and its roles in the planning system are fragmented between two very different parts of the website, requiring the user to be aware of, and to switch between, the two areas.

This situation, by no means unique to the City of Lincoln Council, presents a common obstacle to communities wishing to access heritage information for plan-making purposes, as their likely landing point will only offer information about one aspect of the historic environment. Access to other information depends on effective signposting to web pages or redirection by council officers. Full online access to heritage information is therefore dependant on a chain of events, rather than being provided as a coherent package.

Considerations for community access to HER Information

- All HERs maintain an online presence, enabling members of the public to identify relevant types of information and to arrange access via a Remote Enquiry or Visit

- Depending on the types of heritage information held and made available online by HERs, communities will have two different experiences of accessing it. This may result in an incomplete picture of the heritage information available for their area:

  1. Communities are highly likely to be able to directly access a 'core group' of heritage information online, mainly consisting of data hosted within a GIS, such as archaeology and designated heritage assets. A variety of innovative, often map or catalogue based, interfaces have been developed to promote online access to this 'core group', enabling location based and other metadata searches

  2. Access to other forms of information, including written reports, maps, images and documentary sources, is comparatively limited and less consistent, meaning that online research will need to be supplemented by other forms of enquiry. Where available, access is less spatially orientated, arguably presenting a less consolidated and enticing interface than for other types of information. These types of information are rarely integrated with HER data displayed on maps, reducing the ability of users to search by location

- With the necessary resources, there is high potential to make more HER information available Online. Useful innovative precedents are being set by pioneering local authorities, some of whom are using common online interfaces to make certain types of information, such as maps and characterisation studies, available Online

- Information accessible Online is often fragmented between multiple websites or interfaces, meaning that a variety of resources will need to be navigated in order to gain access to the full amount of heritage information available. The disaggregated nature of the online resource often means that routes to information are not logical or are poorly signposted, significantly reducing the accessibility of information

- The fragmentation of heritage information often serves to divorce it from its potential applications, both individually and in connection with other types of information, meaning users receive an disjointed understanding of its potential use in place-shaping

- Filters according to specific topics, themes and 'local places' in particular, provide increased levels of access to information alongside an element of analysis and interpretation. These are available in many ways (e.g. as character areas or parish summaries) providing a useful resource and starting point for communities researching the heritage of their local area

- There are a growing number of websites providing integrated access to HER, Archive, Library, and/or Museum information. These interfaces enable communities to cross analyse information from multiple sources, and assist them by providing a single point for research.

MUSEUMS

On first glance the results indicated a relatively high level of online access across all information types. Despite the apparently high availability of the information online, access is typically partial, with very few Museums able to provide comprehensive online access for any given topic. Therefore where online access is established, it will typically only be for restricted proportions of Museum holdings.

All Museums that responded to the questionnaire have some form of online presence on local authority web pages. These typically offer limited amounts of information, generally describing opening times and venues, as well as providing contact details. Where several Museums are located within in a local authority, this information is often presented as a series of sub-pages (e.g. **http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/acs/sites/museums**).

Approximately 50% of the museums responding indicated that they also maintained a bespoke website dedicated to their own Museum. The information available on these sites varies significantly both in terms of content and detail. The most basic offer visitors information about opening times, locations and contact details alongside links to other organisations and relevant information. More detailed websites offer information about holdings, including lists of collections and exhibitions (e.g. **http://www.moyseshall.org/sebc_heritage/index.cfm**). In some instances websites include downloadable information sheets or publications in PDF format, offering mediated information typically about topics, geographical areas or periods. There are also a small number of examples of online exhibitions and collections, where highlights of the Museum's collections are shown in detail, including images and descriptions of selected artefacts.

At the most advanced level of access, available for around 60% of Museums responding to the questionnaire, online users have the ability to browse digitised Museum catalogues through metadata, descriptions and images of objects. Search forms provide varying levels of access, predominantly based on key words in a free text box, which cover options such as name, location and description. The most common tools provided are those which allow searches on the Name or ID number of the objects of interest, and the relevant Museum where a website covers more than one repository. The most comprehensive systems, for example Maidstone Museum Service (**http://collections.maidstonemuseum.co.uk/adlib/Default.aspx**) and Bristol Museum (see Case Study 4), allow the user to search by location (including postcode) as well as allowing queries based on the properties of the objects themselves, such as the materials they were made from, the period from which they came, and any inscriptions. It is therefore possible to perform a localised search to return information about a specific area, and to sub-divide that search using periods and materials of interest. However, as very few of the sites examined provide a map-based facility to search for and display information (e.g. **http://blackcountryhistory.org/map**), users will typically need to undertake additional research to pinpoint the exact locations.

Only two respondents indicated that they maintain websites suitable for access on mobile devices. In one case, this was simply a mobile-optimised version of the main local authority website, and offered no extra functionality for mobile devices. The other case, Rochdale's Link4Life service, indicated that they upload photographic data to a third party service called History Pin (**http://www.historypin.com/**). This service maintains a traditional desktop

Information Type	Access	Partial
Archaeology	63%	63%
Architecture & Buildings	68%	64%
Landscape & Settlement	67%	61%
Social history	71%	67%
Industry & Commerce	74%	68%

website which allows users to browse images using a map interface overlaid with spatially located thumbnail images. The mobile phone application allows members of the public to upload their own photographs and information, as well as viewing contributions from others.

As noted earlier in the Chapter, there appears to be growing evidence of joint working between Museums and other repositories in the provision of online data access. **The existence of searchable online databases raises the possibility of joint access to HER and Museum information through common interfaces, as seen in the Black Country Website (see Case Study 1).**

Overall, it can be seen that direct online access to Museum collections appears to be generally quite limited and partial where established, with few examples of detailed and high level accessibility.

CASE STUDY 4:

Bristol Museums Collection Search

Bristol's searchable online catalogue (http://museums.bristol.gov.uk/) 'currently holds records for over 150,000 objects, natural sciences specimens and archaeological excavation archives', and includes information from Bristol's local authority museums and gallery. The online facility offers three main options for the user to search for information:

■ *Keyword* – Allows search by location, material, site name and other keywords, but only allows the use of a single term

■ *Quick Search* – Uses the same keyword functionality, but restricts returns to a specific collection of the Museum

■ *Detailed Search* (image below) – Allows the user to search using combinations of ten different terms, and gives an option to return only those entries with an associated image.

The site is an example of how a comprehensively catalogued collection can be made searchable by the general public using a vast range of terms, including location criteria. The latter criteria, including 'Precise Location' and 'Locality' may be particularly useful for communities undertaking Neighbourhood Plans within the city, especially as within non-parished urban areas Neighbourhood Plan teams can define the extents of their plan areas.

The website concedes that approximately 150,000 of an estimate 1 million objects held are available to search online. Usefully, other pages within the local authority site indicate what collections are 'on display' and what is stored in various locations around Bristol. The pages include pointers to where and how both displayed and stored information can be accessed.

Considerations for community access to Museum Information

- Very high proportions of Museums maintain an Online presence, enabling members of the public to identify relevant resources and to arrange access via a Remote Enquiry or Visit

- Direct online access to Museum collections is rare, and partial where established, meaning users will encounter a limited sample of information online, placing added emphasis on other forms of enquiry

- Online catalogue search criteria vary from one Museum to another, but typically allow for a comprehensive number of criteria to be searched. However, Museum information does not appear commonly catalogued by its precise location. Although it is often possible to use location-based terms in free text searches (e.g. street name or village), this is likely to return a partial view of collections

- Museum holdings available online are often split between two or more websites, meaning that members of the public may need to divide their research between numerous national and/or local web-resources to obtain information

- In a handful of instances, Museum collections are searchable online through interfaces that also offer access to Archive, HER and library sources. These enable communities to cross analyse information from multiple sources and assist them by providing a single point for research

- A number of innovative techniques are being developed by some Museums to provide more direct public access to collections. These include online exhibitions, mapped interfaces, records of previous exhibitions or virtual tours. Depending on the structure and format of catalogues, in particular the inclusion of location in catalogue structures, these could be adopted by other museums

- Filters according to specific topics, in particular 'local places', provide increased levels of access to information according to specific administrative and other local areas, alongside an element of analysis and interpretation. These provide a useful resource and starting point for communities wishing to research the historic environment of their local area.

A2.2 Remote Enquiry

ARCHIVES

Whilst high proportions of Archives make information accessible via a Remote Enquiry, the questionnaire results indicate that accessibility of specific holdings within each information type varies considerably (e.g. 57%-89% of map holdings are available via Remote Enquiry). The inconsistency in levels of access can be explained both by the differing approaches taken by individual Archives, but also by a number of common obstacles that Archives encounter in making information accessible in response to a Remote Enquiry (see box right).

Restrictions may relate to the physical condition of any documents being too fragile or large to copy (e.g. large maps that are hard to scan), or their reproduction may be limited by copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey mapping, literature and some images). Consequently **communities may not be able to access significant proportions of holdings remotely, simply because copies cannot be supplied via post or email.**

Another obstacle to Remote Enquiries, and indeed other forms of enquiry, is the extent to which holdings are catalogued. Although large proportions of Archive holdings are catalogued, many collections remain in development or are un-digitised, and are therefore inaccessible by Remote Enquiry. Crucially, several Archives noted that a Remote Enquiry would incur a research fee where precise references could not be given. In these cases it is clear that local communities would need access to a catalogue of Archive holdings in order to avoid the fee,

Information Type	Access
Maps	57-89%
Lists & Registers	70-83%
Records	69-77%
Wills, Probate & Deeds	69-74%
Plans	64-73%
Images & Media	56-81%

"All original materials are available for copying, though this might be restricted to photos due to condition of the documents." **Enfield Archive**

and if such a catalogue is not made available online the user would need to make a physical Visit to the Archive to do so.

preference to supply information as a scan or digital image. This is likely to reflect the increase in born-digital image holdings, as well as the results of scanning projects. 'Other' formats of information used by Archives to supply information include transcripts, specific types of file format (e.g. .pdf), as well as more specialist formats such as photographic reproductions.

Archives are typically able to provide information in response to a Remote Enquiry in a range of hardcopy or digital formats. The most common format is a photocopy of a document, indicating the hardcopy un-digitised nature of many holdings. Printouts of information are notably lower, indicating a preference amongst Archives to distribute electronically where information is already held in digital format. This is particularly apparent in the supply of 'Images and Media', where there was a strong

Obstacles to providing information

- Data protection
- Copyright
- Condition and conservation
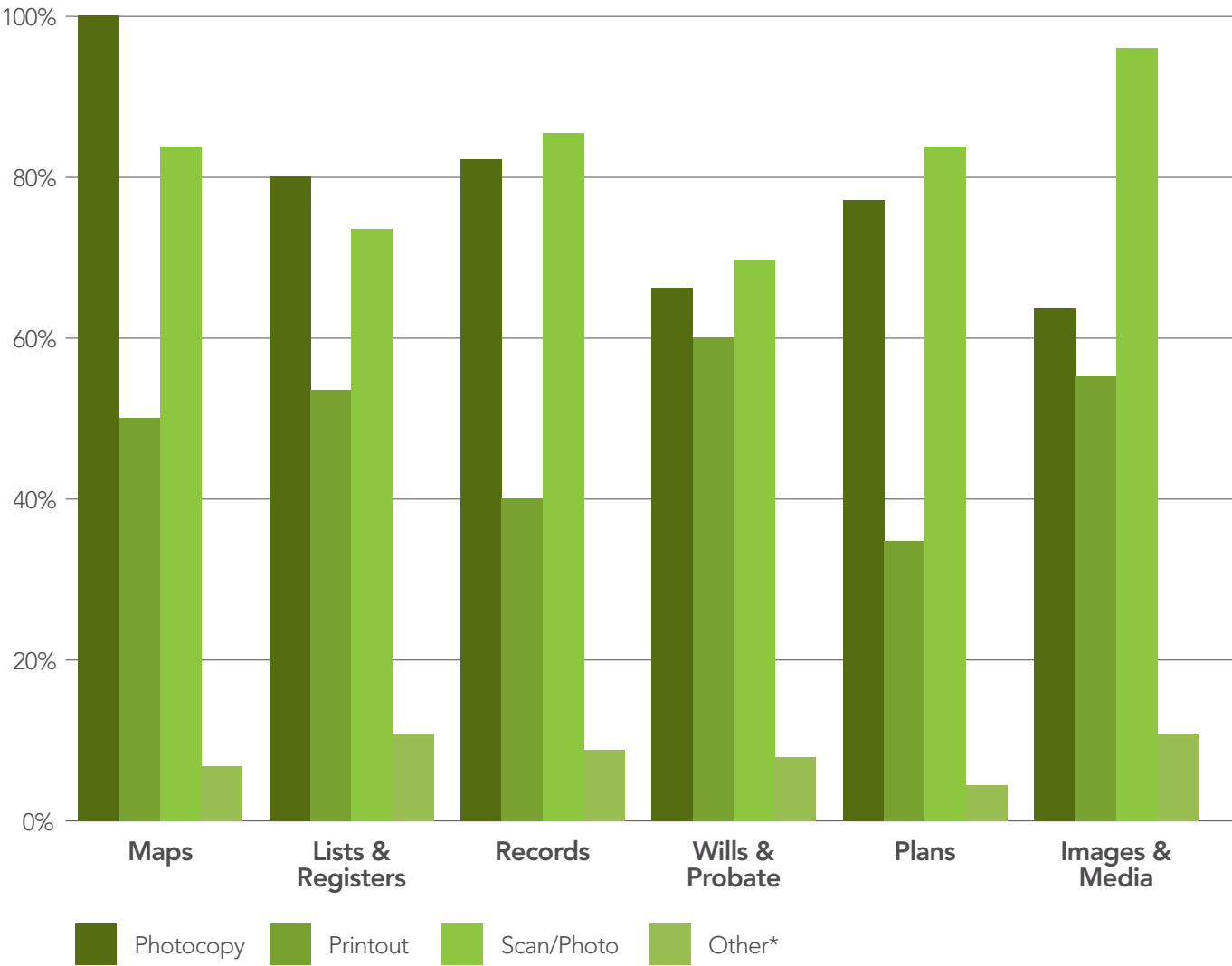- Search costs
- Catalogue availability
- Physical size

Figure 4: Percentages of Archives providing the information they hold via Remote Enquiry according to format

HERs

Remote Enquiry is the most commonly available method of accessing information held by HERs (see Figure 1). All repositories who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they are able to provide information in this way.

The availability of HER information via a Remote Enquiry varies according to the specific types of information that are held. The results of the questionnaire revealed that monument and, to a slightly lesser degree, designation information can be supplied by almost all HERs in response to a Remote Enquiry. The emphasis on these two information types was mirrored in the levels of Online access provided by HERs.

The provision of types of designation information is slightly more variable (87-100%) than that for monuments (94-98%), but this is accounted for by 13% of HERs being unable to provide information about conservation areas. The results would otherwise show a much smaller variance of between 94-100% of HERs. Deeper investigation of the questionnaire results shows that those HERs unable to provide information on conservation areas are housed within the upper level of two-tier or similarly structured local authorities, suggesting that the structure of local government is potentially influencing the provision of national, county and local heritage information.

Lower proportions of HERs are able to provide access to information about 'character' and 'images & media'. Access to cartographic information is poorer still, as is that afforded to bibliographic holdings. In the case of the latter, this may be explained by the hardcopy nature of many holdings, the duplication of which is onerous and often restricted by copyright. This supposition is arguably confirmed by the higher proportion (73%) of HERs able to provide grey literature reports (e.g. Heritage Assessment) in response to a Remote Enquiry, as increasing numbers of these are now supplied in digital format and are able to be distributed more easily.

The supply of maps in response to a Remote Enquiry varies considerably according to the type of map. Modern and Historic Ordnance Survey mapping is held by all HERs who responded to the questionnaire, but is only made available by Remote Enquiry by 50% of them, revealing a divided approach amongst the HER community. Responses to the questionnaire demonstrated that the provision of mapping information is often constrained by copyright issues, as well as practical issues of copying larger sized maps. As such, mapping information is likely to be out of copyright where supplied, and/or property of the relevant local council.

Remote Access to Maps	%
Current OS	48%
Historic OS	54%
Tithe	48%
Enclosure	71%
Other Historic Maps	60%
Political boundaries	47%

Due to the way HER holdings are structured, information can often be provided in a wide range of digital and hardcopy formats depending on the requirements of an inquirer. With the exception of bibliographic holdings, HERs are nearly twice as able to provide information in digital format, such as a .pdf, GIS file, digital image or other digital document, as they are in hardcopy format. This

Information Type	Access
Monuments	94-98%
Designations	87-100%
Character	79-88%
Maps	47-71%
Images and Media	52-60%
Bibliographic	37-73%

may have implications for users who are less 'computer literate', both in terms of accessing, receiving and interpreting information.

The types of HER holdings considered by the questionnaire can be broadly divided into those hosted within a GIS system and linked database (monument, designations and characterisation), and those that are more object or media based, such as images, books/reports and hardcopy maps.

Those hosted within a GIS can be provided as extracted lists/ reports, maps, and GIS Layers by high proportions of HERs. This service is a key element of HER's statutory function of maintaining and providing an evidence-base for planning and the historic environment (NPPF, paragraph 141). 'HER searches' undertaken for commercial archaeological and heritage consultancies are typically provided in these formats, however they are likely to prove less accessible to a non-professional user without the necessary software and skills to interpret and display the information.
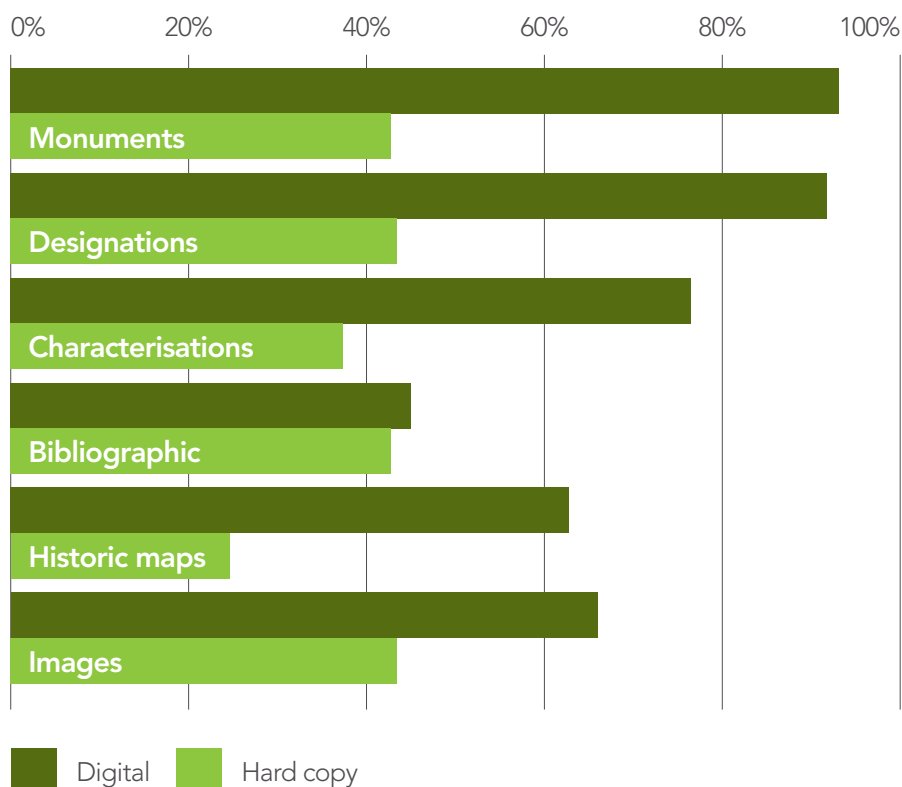

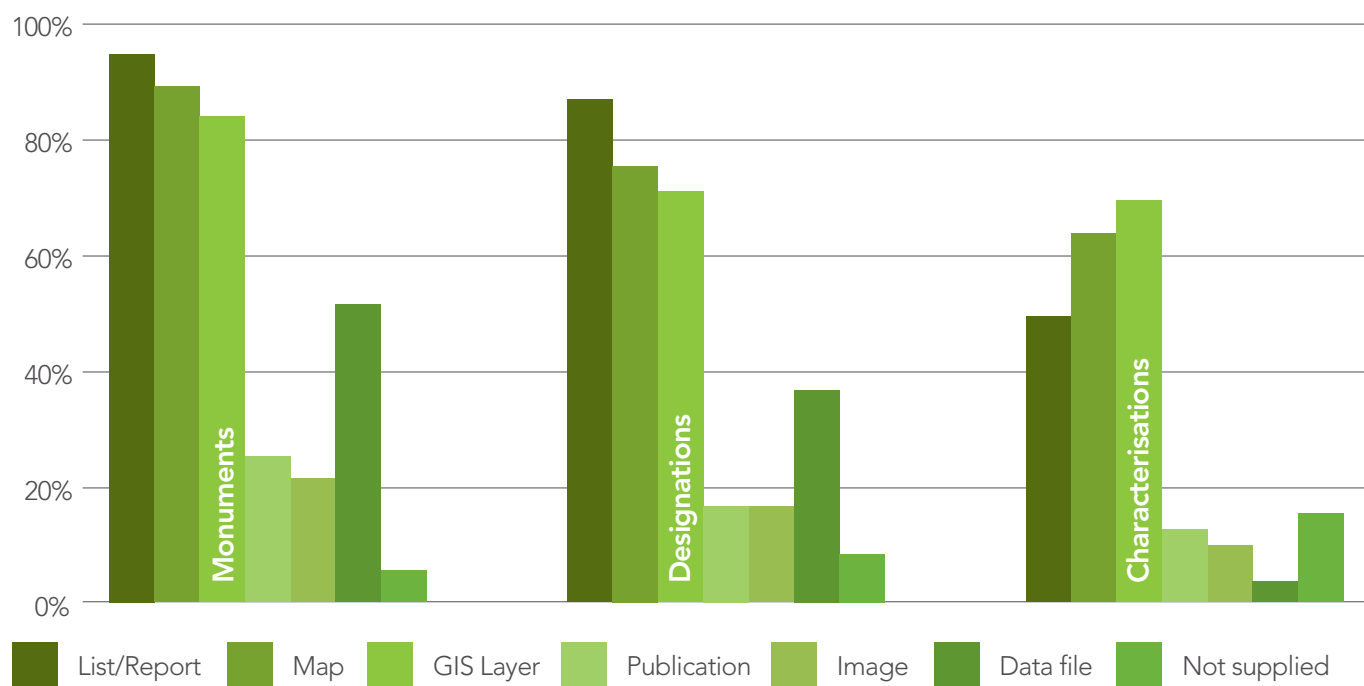**Figure 5: Availability of HER Information types via remote access**

Figure 6: Availability of HER information via remote access by format

This is particularly true of characterisation information which is most commonly available in its least technically accessible form (GIS). Notably there is a consistent discrepancy between the accessibility of monument and designation information across all formats.

Questionnaire responses revealed that around 1 in 10 HERs considered that information about national designations was not their property to distribute, and referred enquiries to the National Heritage List maintained online by English Heritage.

Other formats of information such as images and publications, which are likely to contain higher levels of visual and interpretative information, are accessible for monument, designation and characterisation information, although for somewhat lower proportions of HERs. This has implications for the interpretation and use of HER information (see Chapter D) by communities.

Maps, Images and Bibliographic materials are typically available in their original format. Maps are also able to be provided as a GIS layer by 27% of HERs.

Although charges are typically levied for commercial enquiries, HERs rarely charge for enquires made for public or educational purposes. A number of responses to the questionnaire indicated that charges might be levied for the supply of information in hardcopy format, such as printouts and photocopies.
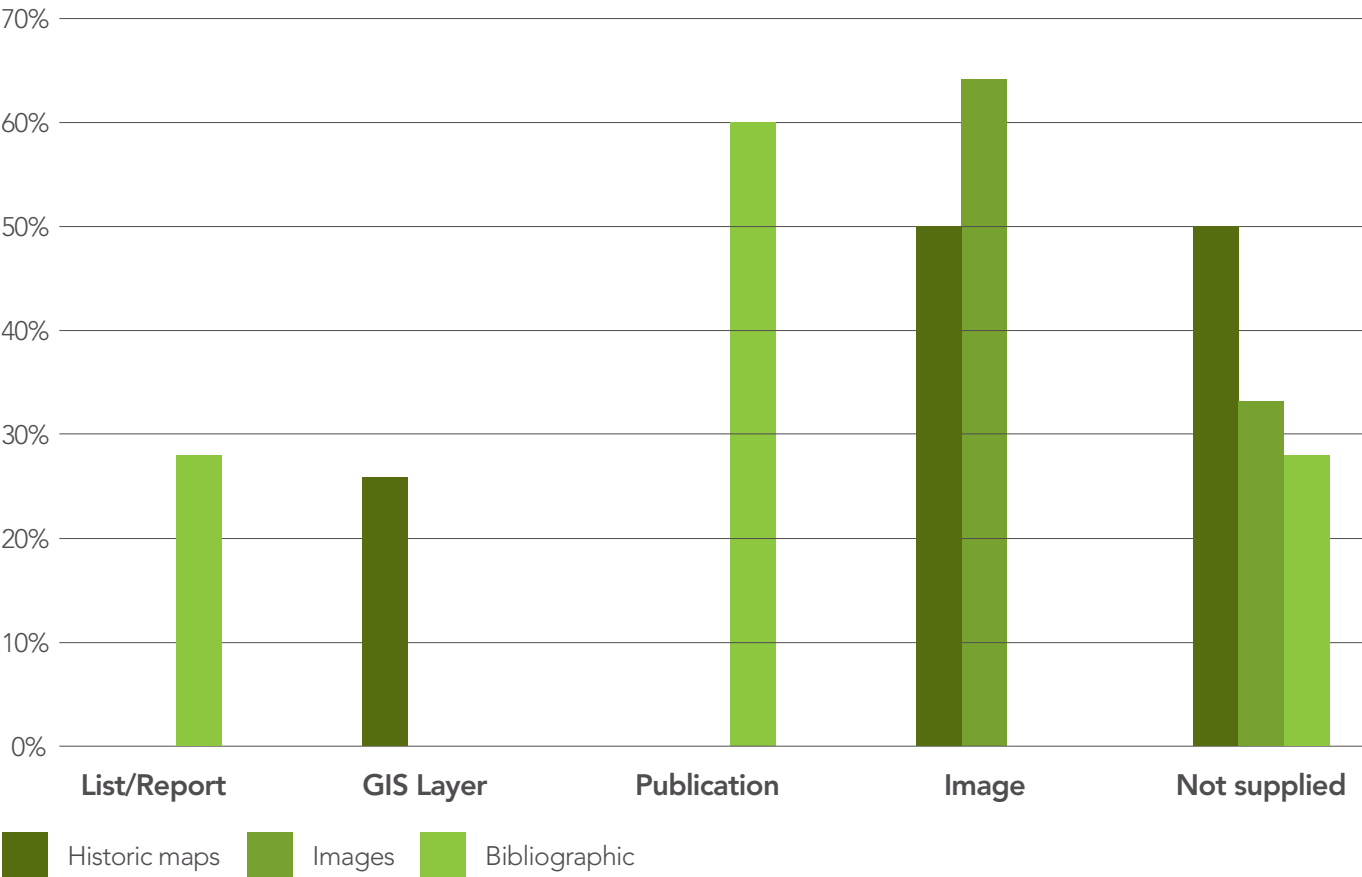

Figure 7 Methods of supplying hardcopy materials vie remote access

Considerations for community access to HER information

- There is a clear divide between HER information that can and cannot be accessed by Remote Enquiry. As such communities will have two different experiences of accessing information:

  1. Communities are highly likely to be able to directly access a 'core group' of heritage information, mainly consisting of data hosted within GIS at HERs, such as archaeology and designated heritage assets. These can be provided in a wide range of formats according to specific locations, presenting a highly accessible resource to members of the public

  2. Access to other forms of information, such as written reports, characterisation studies, maps, images and documentary sources is comparatively limited and less consistent, meaning that full access to HER collections may require a Visit. Compared to the 'core group' of information types above, these other forms of information can typically be supplied in fewer digital or hardcopy formats

- There is an inconsistent approach to the supply of some types of information held by HERs, meaning that access to information by Remote Enquiry varies from one HER to another

- Charges are unlikely to be levied for the research and supply of information for non-commercial reasons, although the supply of information in hardcopy formats may incur a fee

- Information can be supplied in an array of formats, significantly boosting potential accessibility of information. However, some formats require specialist software which can impede access by communities, and there remains a stronger emphasis on the supply in digital format

- Access to HER collections by Remote Enquiry is likely to be more difficult, restricted and expensive for members of the public without access to online resources and basic IT equipment.

MUSEUMS

Communities are highly likely to be able to access some relevant information from their local Museums by Remote Enquiry. The proportion of Museums able to supply information in this way was consistent across all topics considered by the survey, indicating that information relevant to the purposes of Neighbourhood Planning will be obtainable.

Information by Enquiry	Access
Archaeology	44-94%
Architecture & Buildings	41-86%
Landscape & Settlement	44-89%
Social History	43-90%
Industry & Commerce	47-95%

Remote access to the full extent of Museum holdings varies, as between 44-50% of Museums are only able to provide partial access to information. **A Remote Enquiry will also be likely to return only partial results as Museums often have extensive stored collections and physical artefact information**. Accessibility to exhibited and non-exhibited information is discussed further in Section A2.3 below.

Results of the questionnaire indicated that Museums are most likely to be able to supply drawn records & designs, photographs, documents, artwork and maps in response to a Remote Enquiry. The most commonly supplied formats of information include descriptive text and images.

The availability of other materials, including reports/publications, mapped information and data, drops significantly and varies between 14-33% depending on the topic. Mapped information for Landscape & Settlement is notably higher at 33%, as might be expected. The availability of audio-visual, artefact samples and 'other' types of material is limited to 5-10% of Museums who responded to the questionnaire.

Digital materials are clearly the most common method of supplying information across all topics, although over 60% of Museums who respond to Remote Enquiries are also able to provide information in hardcopy format. Digital material is mainly in the form of image or document files, while hardcopy material is usually in the form of a publication for sale or a photocopy of relevant information.
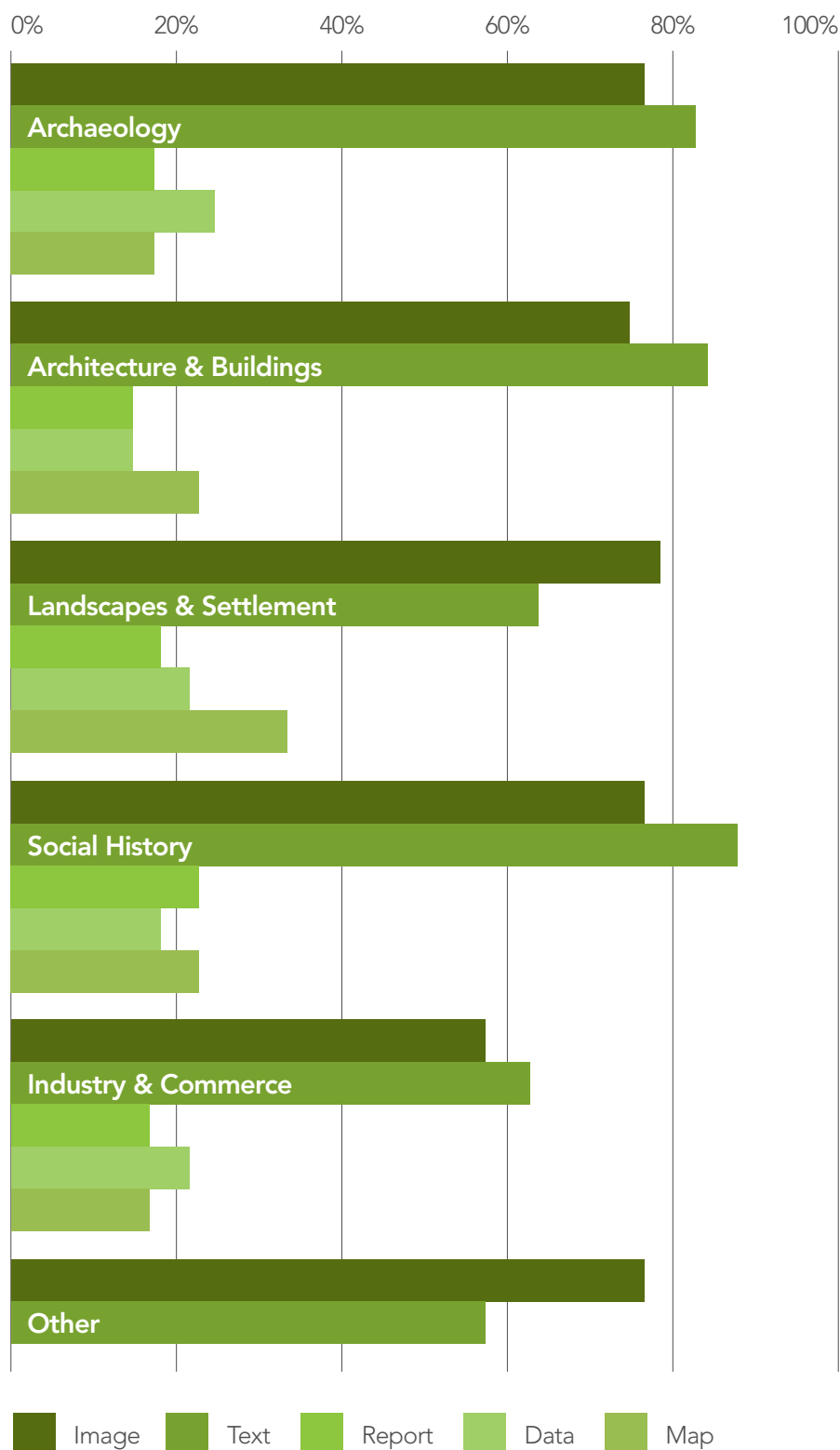
Figure 8: Availability via Remote Enquiry of topic based information by format

- Communities are able to access Museum collections by Remote Enquiry, although access is typically only to parts of collections

- Materials accessible by Remote Enquiry predominantly include document or image-based collections, such as drawings, maps, and photographs

- Museums are able to provide a wide range of materials in response to a Remote Enquiry, but enquirers will mainly be able to access descriptive text and images as opposed to other forms of media, data and physical artefacts

- There is a strong emphasis on the provision of information in digital format, and consequently it is more accessible to those with access to online resources and basic IT equipment

- Over half of Museums are also able to provide information in hardcopy formats which enables access by members of the public who are less equipped or able to use digital information.

The chart shows a bar chart with vertical axis from 0% to 100% in 20% increments. Categories along the horizontal axis each have a Digital (dark green) and Hardcopy (light green) bar:

- Archaeology: Digital ~95%, Hardcopy ~62%
- Architecture & Buildings: Digital ~89%, Hardcopy ~64%
- Landscapes & Settlement: Digital ~81%, Hardcopy ~60%
- Social History: Digital ~87%, Hardcopy ~65%
- Industry & Commerce: Digital ~79%, Hardcopy ~62%
- Other: Digital ~81%, Hardcopy ~35%

Legend: Digital (dark green), Hardcopy (light green)
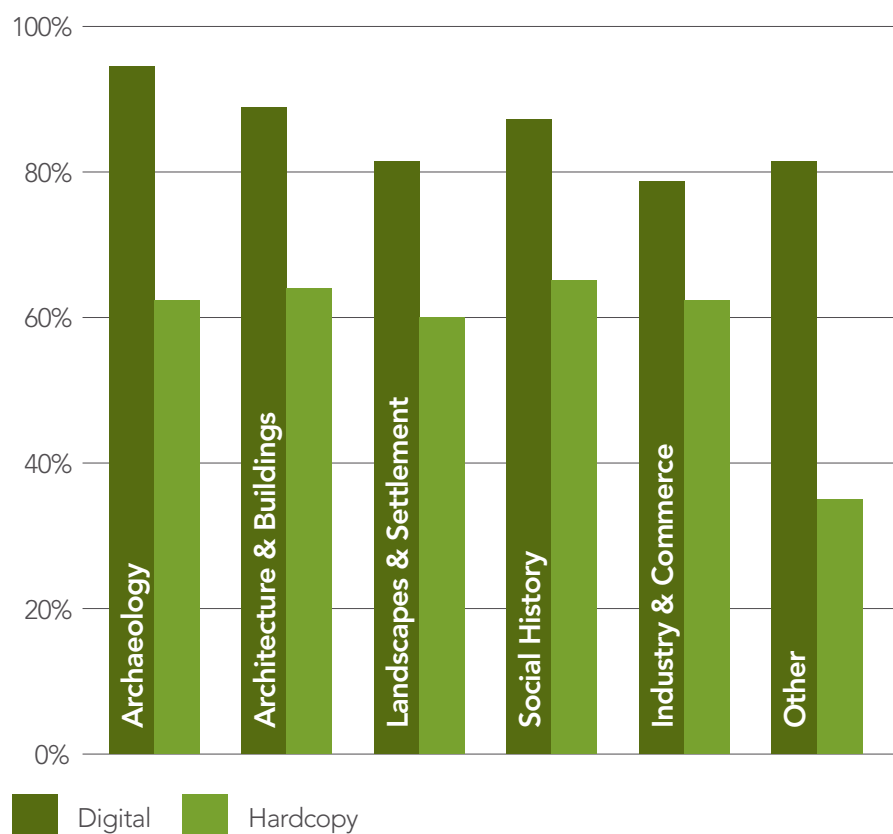
Figure 9: Availability of Museum information Types via remote access

A2.3 Visit

This Section considers the increased levels of accessibility of information that is accessible to communities by a physical Visit to a repository, beyond that which is accessible either Online or by Remote Enquiry.

Overall physical accessibility of the three repositories

A Visit provides the highest level of access to the information held by Archives, HERs and Museums. Visitors will also be able to obtain the highest level of assistance with searching for and interpreting information. This is true except for approximately 1 in 10 HERs which are not open for visitation and therefore only provide information Online and/ or by Remote Enquiry.

In contrast, both Museums and Archives are fully open for visitation, with 91% being open 5 days during

the week and between 78-96% at the weekends. HERs also have marginally poorer levels of access during the week, but significantly poorer levels of access at the weekend with only 4% opening to the public outside of the normal working week.

Of note is that although Museums have the highest overall level of access throughout the whole week, approximately 30% of those that responded to the questionnaire have reduced seasonal hours.

Comparison of basic research facilities available at each of the three repositories showed that **Archives are noticeably more geared towards receiving and providing resources to visitors than the other two repositories**. With the exception of a dedicated workspace, HERs offer the second best level of facilities, with Museums notably less able to offer IT/computer access to their holdings and the internet.

"There might be very rare occasions when I might be able to provide office time and space – but there'd have to be a compelling reason not to provide the information via phone and/or digitally. The exception are the grey reports that aren't scanned yet, which I would attempt to provide as photocopies."
Chichester District HER

With considerably more information able to be accessed by Visit than for any other form of enquiry the availability of the requisite facilities, alongside the opening hours of repositories, has significant implications for communities wishing to access the full breadth of heritage information held for their local area. The variation in approach, both amongst repositories of the same type and between Archives, HERs and Museums, suggests that some communities will be much more able to access information than others. In the case of HERs those communities not able to visit during the working week will not be able to access information and assistance. **Favourable opening hours and better facilities available at Archives promotes them as a potential venue for a combined provision of heritage information to local communities** as exemplified by The Hive, which houses the Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service.
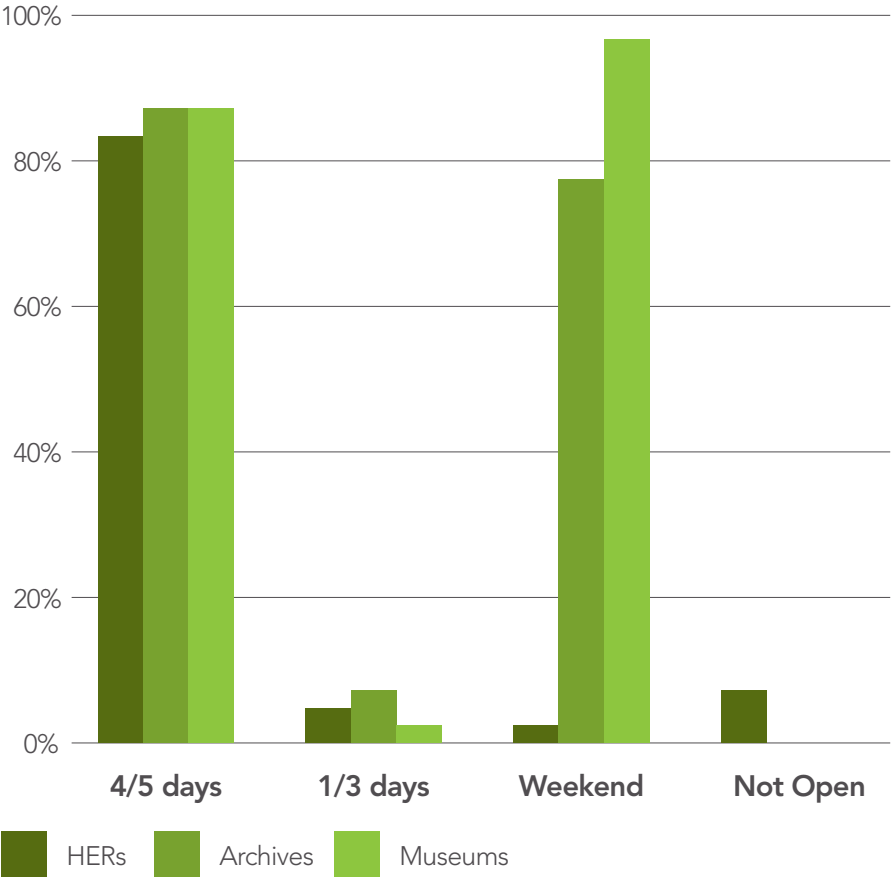

Figure 10: Days on which repositories are physically accessible by the public

"The Bolton History Centre is a dedicated research room for Local History and Family History research. We have 9 Computers with Internet Access and free access to Ancestry (Library Edition) and Find My Past (2 licences), plus an addition Stand-Alone PC for access to CD-Rom based resources. We have 10 x Microfilm / Microfiche viewers, and a stand-alone PC-based digital microfilm scanner and dedicated printer. All search room facilities are accessible to people with wheelchairs."
Bolton Archive & Local Studies

ARCHIVE

Responses from Archives showed that a much greater amount of information is available by Visit than by other means. Information types with the largest increases in accessibility included wills, probate and deeds, plans and images & media. Responses from Archives also showed that a range of additional materials is available on location, including:

- Paper based catalogues
- Uncatalogued information
- Recently received information
- Undigitised materials (e.g. images, literature)
- Microfilm/fiche
- Newspapers
- Ordnance Survey and other maps
- Bibliographic holdings

Information by Visit	Access
Maps	90-98%
Lists & Registers	91-93%
Records	84-95%
Wills, Probate & Deeds	87-93%
Plans	85-92%
Images & Media	86-95%

Comparison of the formats of Archive information available by Visit with that available by a Remote Enquiry revealed that improved accessibility is largely due to the ability to access holdings in their original hardcopy formats, and to a lesser extent as microfiche/film. The results also showed how users are able to access information in a wider range of formats than for other methods of access.

Archives frequently emphasised that search fees would be not be incurred upon a Visit, and that visitors are encouraged to copy, transcribe or photograph information, although the latter may come at a cost. As with Remote Enquiries the ability to take copies of information was subject to copyright, practicalities and conservation needs.

(A visit…) "Offers a chance to view items that cannot be scanned or copied. Gives a chance to access advice and expertise and for staff to discover what the purpose of the enquiry is for, not always stated in correspondence. They can then alert the customer to material that may be available shortly but is not in catalogue yet as it is a new accession. Visitor can carry out their own digital photography, for which there is a one day or annual licence. Adds to the breadth of information that can be accessed, by enabling the enquiry to be dealt with in more depth, and by the enquirer following up avenues that occur on the day." **Isle of Wight Archive**

Figure 11: Facilities offered by repositories

"Photocopies can sometimes be done on the day. Digital camera permits available for own use (currently £6.50 per day or £40 per year)." **Staffordshire Archive**
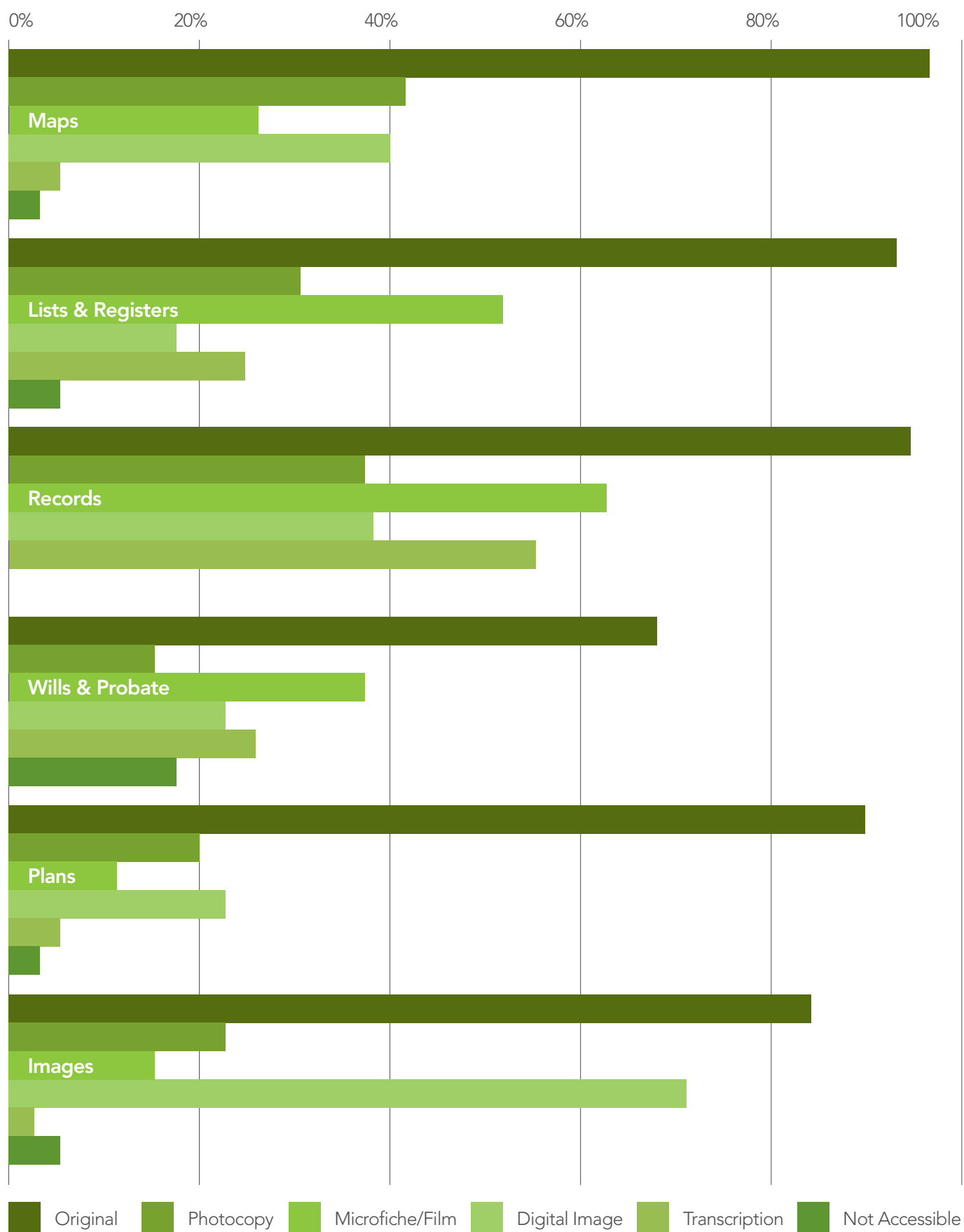
Figure 12: Formats of information held by Archives available at a Visit

Legend: Original, Photocopy, Microfiche/Film, Digital Image, Transcription, Not Accessible

Categories: Maps, Lists & Registers, Records, Wills & Probate, Plans, Images

Considerations for community access

- Significantly more Archive information is publically accessible by Visit than Online or by Remote Enquiry, enabling communities to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the historic environment of their area

- Archives generally have well equipped research facilities and are open to the public throughout the week, providing high levels of access both during and outside of normal working hours

- Archive staff are typically able to provide assistance with enquiries and searching, increasing the likelihood that all relevant and available resources will be accessed

- Small proportions of Archive holdings may remain inaccessible due to cataloguing or conservation issues, but staff assistance is likely to mitigate this effect

- Visitors to Archives are likely to find several key types of information accessible, in particular those held in hardcopy format (e.g. newspapers and Microfiche), that are typically not accessible Online or by Remote Enquiry

- Information can be gathered in a wide range of formats, many of which can be obtained free of charge, particularly as Archives encourage visitors to transcribe, photograph or copy materials, and search fees do not apply

- A physical Visit to an Archive may require an investment of time and resources, especially as many Archives serve large geographical areas, such as an entire county, from a single location.

HER

A wide range of additional information to that made available by Remote Enquiry is accessible upon visiting an HER. These were identified by HERs as typically being:

- Reports (e.g. Greenbacks)
- Grey literature
- Images
- Bibliographic
- Aerial photographs
- Historic maps
- Survey data and sheets
- Paper-based HER records

Information by Visit	Access
Information by Visit	87-89%
Designations	74-92%
Character	64-79%
Maps	58-100%
Images and Media	68-77%
Bibliographic	78-82%

Comparison of information made accessible by Visit to an HER against that supplied for a Remote Enquiry showed a divided picture. On one hand monument, designation and characterisation information is consistently less accessible than by Remote Enquiry as the figures included c.9% of HERs holding the information but closed to visitation. Taking this figure into account, these three types of information have an equivalent accessibility to that able to be supplied in response to a Remote Enquiry. However, Maps (+29%), Images & Media (+17%) and Bibliographic (+41%) information are significantly more accessible than for Online or Remote Enquiry.

Closer inspection of the formats of information available via a Visit in comparison to Remote Enquiry showed that there is increased access across all information types. In particular publications and images are significantly more accessible. The increase in accessibility largely relates to access to non-digitised hardcopy materials, however digital images are also more accessible.
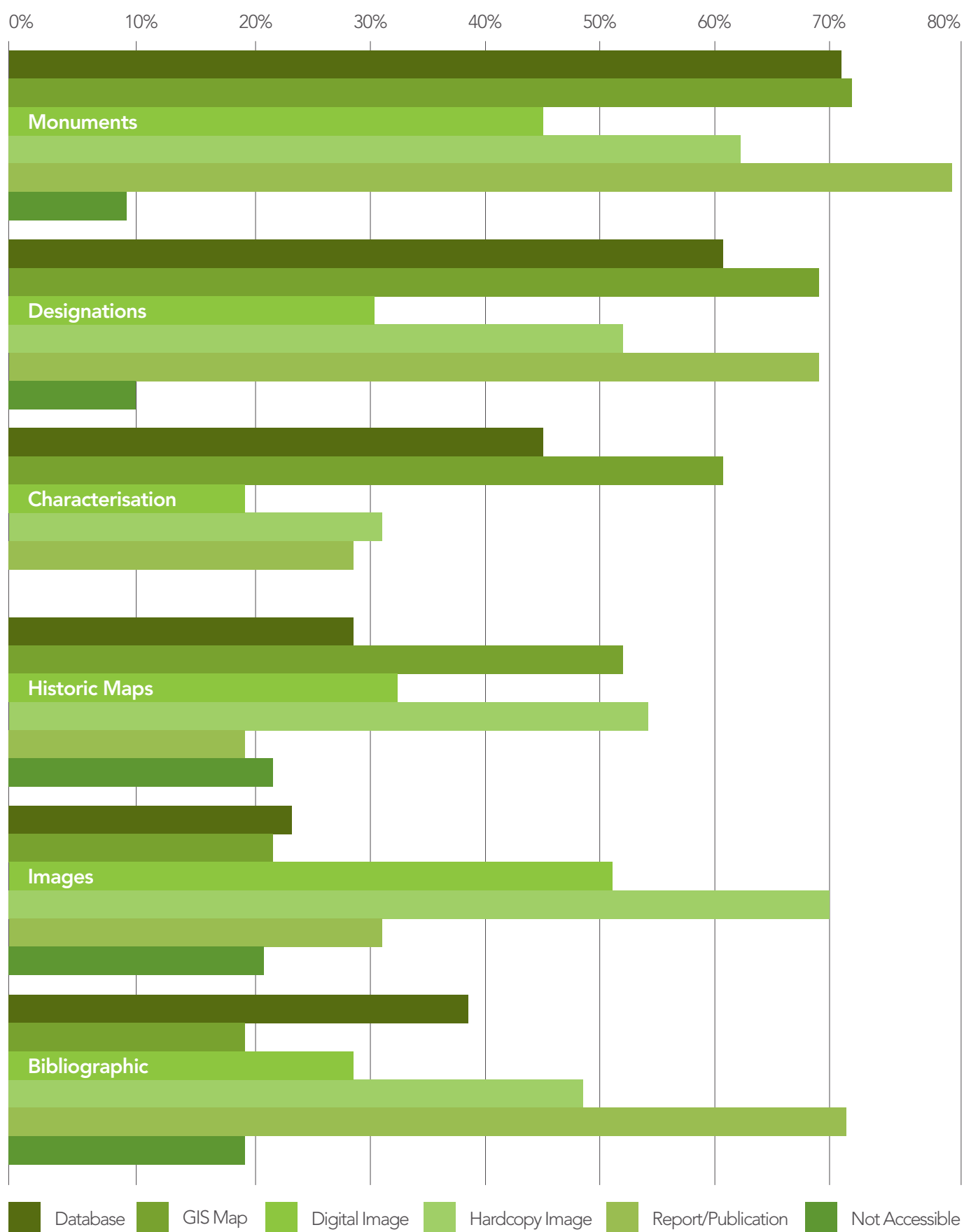
Several HERs indicated that they can provide photo or scanned copies of this information that they would not otherwise provide in response to a Remote Enquiry.

Similar to information held by Archives and Museums, materials within copyright are not able to be copied, but are able to be accessed and viewed, unlike for Remote Enquiries. In a small number of instances, HERs stated that digital materials are made available to visitors that are not available via a Remote Enquiry.

Figure 13: Formats of information available from HER offices by Visit

MUSEUMS

A significantly higher proportion of Museums are able to provide information on location in comparison to those able to provide information by Remote Enquiry or Online. Notably, where material concerning a specific topic is held, 100% of Museums are able to provide access to the visiting public. Furthermore, **between 77% and 100% of Museums are able to provide access to the full range of materials (e.g. document, object/artefact, graphic, art, aural and digital holdings) that they hold for any given topic**. In responding to the questionnaire, museums indicated that the types of materials that would be more or only accessible by Visit include:

- Literature
- Printed materials
- Artefacts and objects

Depending on the topics, low levels of Museums (6-23%) exhibit all of their collections, at a given time, with remaining information archived. This may significantly influence the ability of communities to access information about their local areas as much of it may be archived.

Information Topic	Access
Archaeology	94-100%
Architecture & Buildings	77-100%
Landscape & Settlement	89-100%
Social History	81-100%
Industry & Commerce	84-100%

It is likely that the geographical scope of a Museum (i.e. county, parish, estate etc.) will strongly influence whether or not communities will be able to access displayed information directly relevant to their plan area. Where Museums have wide geographical remits, communities are likely to encounter displayed information that is representative of the wider area, placing emphasis on their ability to access archived items.

All Museums responding to the questionnaire indicated that they provide some form of public access to their stored collections. The vast majority of Museums provide access by one-to-one appointment (86%) with a member of staff, around 25% offer tours of their stored collections, and 50% offer a retrieval and view service.

Around 62% of Museums provide Online access to catalogues of their collections, enabling the public to search and, where required, arrange access to stored collections in advance. A total of 71% of Museums indicated that they maintain a computerised catalogue of holdings, showing that at least a further 1 in 10 additional Museums could be making catalogued information available online. However, only 27% of Museums indicated that they provide public access to computerised catalogues on-site, and only 32% provide internet access. As such, the ability for visiting members of the public to search for information falls significantly short of its potential. Furthermore, approximately one third of Museums indicated that

their stored collections are only manually searchable as catalogues are not digitised, and this has implications for online searching and also whether communities will get a comprehensive of the information available for their areas.

Furthermore, **the extent to which either a member of staff or public will be able to access Museum information about a local area, such as that pertaining to a Neighbourhood Plan area, will be governed by the format of catalogues**. Whilst some may include precise location criteria other catalogues have imprecise or no-location metadata associated with them. Consequently, information relevant to plan areas may not be accessed.

In terms of displayed information, the results showed that Museums employ a wide range of methods to make information accessible to the visiting public. Unsurprisingly, 100% of Museums make information available in the form of exhibitions, however a range of other techniques are employed including audio-visual materials (61%) and models (48%).

'Other' methods of access highlighted by Museums included demonstrations, printed resources (e.g. educational packs), learning sessions, digital versions of previous exhibitions, website and newsletter features on objects, local radio programmes.

Around a third of Museums responding to the questionnaire indicated that they can supply additional information to that which they make available by Remote Enquiry or Online (see Sections A2.2 and A2.1). These resources mainly include documentary hardcopy holdings such as drawings, images and bibliographic materials,
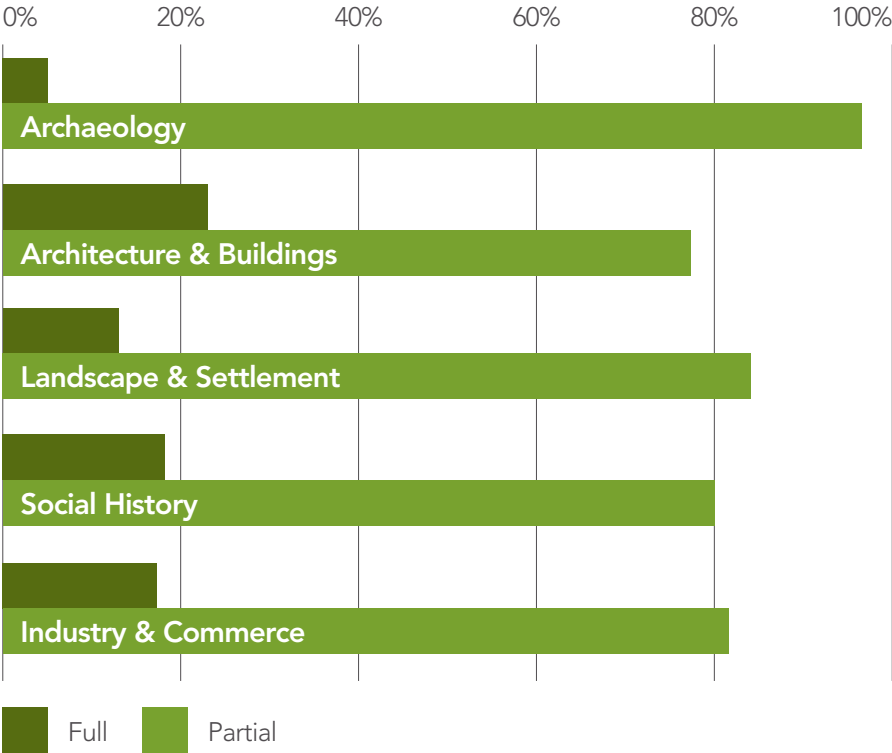

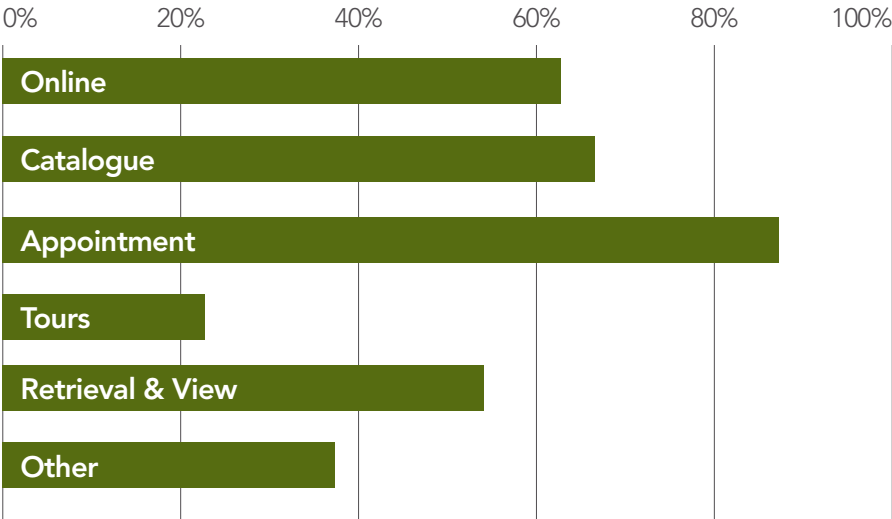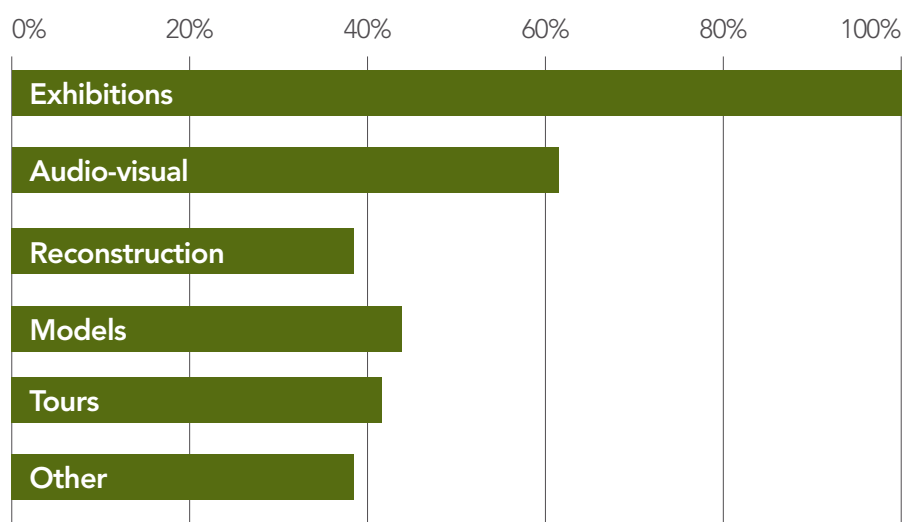Figure 14: Levels of access to Museum holdings by topic

Figure 15: Methods of access to archived or stored Museum collections

Figure 16: Methods of access for displayed Museum collections

although many Museums stressed that they were able to provide these in digital format, as well as actual artefacts. Of note is a small number of Museums that are able to provide verbal advice and input to a visiting member of the public.

Considerations for community access

- Significantly more Museum information is publically accessible by Visit than Online or by Remote Enquiry, enabling communities to gain a better understanding of the historic environment of their area

- Access remains heavily partial, as only small proportions of collections are displayed, and therefore, depending on the geographical scope of the museum and the nature of stored collections, communities are likely to interact with material that is representative of a wider area (e.g. county or district), rather than specific to their local plan area (e.g. Parish)

- Communities are often able to access stored collections by appointment. This requires advanced notice, placing emphasis on Online access to Museum catalogues which is only provided by around 62% of Museums. Consequently in many cases communities may be unsure of the need for or the potential benefits of, undertaking a Visit

- Museums are often poorly equipped for research, often having only basic research facilities. Instead emphasis is placed on staff assistance, exhibited material and other methods of research such as online catalogues, meaning that communities will have to book appointments and/or, where possible, undertake research in advance

- Communities are likely to gain a significantly better understanding of the historic environment of their area from a visit, as they are able to access considerably more materials, in particular physical objects. Moreover they will benefit from an array of ways by which information is made accessible, which are often aimed at increasing understanding and assisting interpretation

- The geographical remit of Museums varies from the local to the international. Communities may therefore be required to travel long distances to access Museums, which may discourage visits. On the other hand they present the most localised resource out of all the three types of repository and therefore may be a useful and nearby venue from which to promote heritage information.

CHAPTER B: HERITAGE INFORMATION ACCESSED BY COMMUNITIES

The results of the community questionnaires showed that over 93% of communities undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan will consider issues relating to their area's local heritage. 84% of communities responding also stated that some form of heritage information was, or would be, accessed for the purposes of preparing their plan. These broad results clearly show the potential role that heritage has to play in Neighbourhood Planning, demonstrating a need for accessible information and expertise about the historic environment to be available to communities.

There are clear variations and preferences in the types and topics of heritage information being accessed by communities. This shows, as may be expected, that there are a number of issues influencing if and how Neighbourhood Plan teams are accessing heritage information.

B1. Types of information

The following series of analyses investigated variances in the types and topics of heritage information accessed by communities and, based on the local authority questionnaire results and additional analysis, consider to what extent the availability of heritage information is influencing information accessed.

B1.1 Designated Heritage Assets

Information about designated heritage assets is highly accessible, being held by all HERs, but also available from other national and local sources. On one hand,
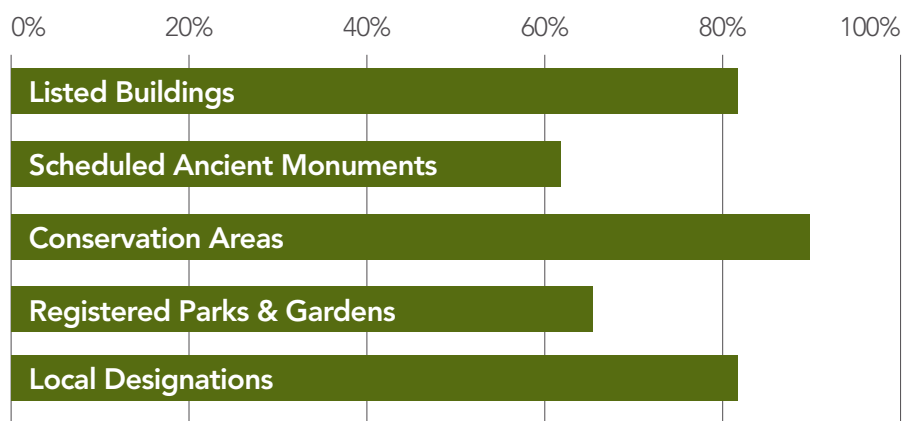

Figure 17: Percentage of Neighbourhood Plan teams accessing information about designated heritage assets where relevant to their plan areas

the results of the community questionnaire showed high proportions of Neighbourhood Plan teams are accessing information about both nationally and locally designated assets where they exist within their plan areas, in particular listed buildings, local designations and conservation areas. **This demonstrates that the vast majority of communities are able to access information about both locally and nationally designated assets.**

However, the proportion of communities accessing heritage information for other designated assets relevant to their plan areas, such as scheduled ancient monuments (SAMs) and registered parks and gardens (RPGs), was comparably lower. Results of the local authority questionnaire showed how accessibility to information about these heritage assets is on a par with other heritage assets. As such, either information is being sourced elsewhere, or is not considered relevant.

Community questionnaire responses indicated that in some cases although designations exist within their plan areas, communities consider that, in retrospect,

they 'Could Have Used' them or maintained that they were 'Not Applicable' for the purposes of their plans. The issues of the awareness and potential application of heritage information is discussed further in Chapter D: Awareness.

Cross analysis of the proportions of communities accessing information about designated heritage assets against the proportions of HERs making the information accessible revealed no clear correlation. Looking across all types of designated asset, there is no clear relationship between the ways that information is made accessible and the number of communities accessing it, **indicating that the method of access may not currently be a decisive factor in whether communities access information.**

The results showed how Neighbourhood Plan teams are accessing information from sources other than HERs, as the proportions of communities accessing information for conservation areas and local designations exceeds that offered by HERs. The use of alternative sources may have implications for the quality and condition of the information being accessed by communities.
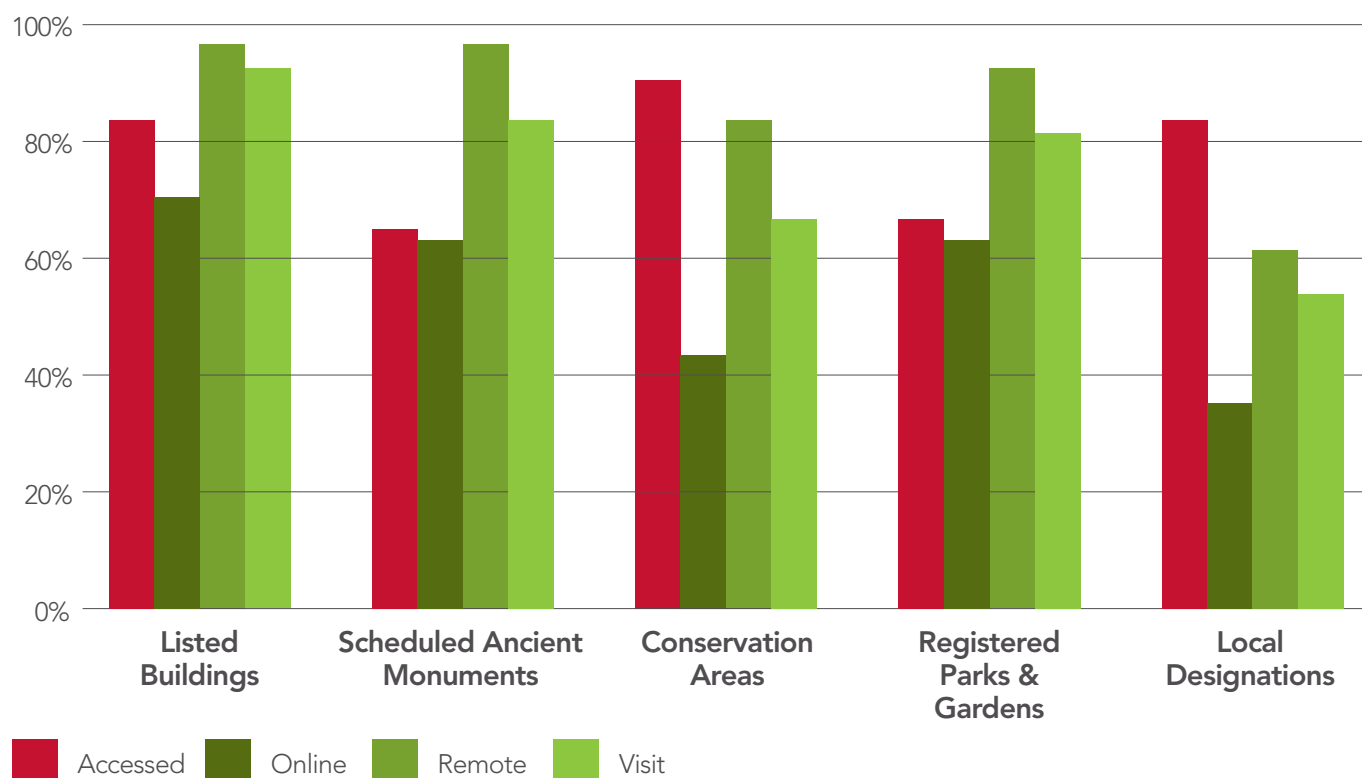
Figure 18: Comparison of the percentage of communities accessing designated heritage asset information with the availability of the information from HERs[6]

As some of the most commonly sourced types of heritage information used in Neighbourhood Planning are not being obtained from HERs, the repositories are losing opportunities to establish contact with teams which would otherwise enable them to proactively raise awareness of other information available.

Higher proportions of communities are accessing locally designated assets, alongside listed buildings and this may be explained by these datasets often being accessible through development management teams within district authorities, who are the main point of contact for local planning issues in two tier authorities. Consequently there may be advantages to raising awareness of the resources and expertise held by Archives, HERs and Museums amongst local authority

planning staff. The extent to which the structure of local authorities is influencing access to information is discussed in B2. Avenues of Access.

B1.2 Records

In general, the types of information typically held by Archives are less commonly accessed by communities undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan. Nonetheless, between 11% and 47% indicated that they had accessed information typically (but not exclusively) held by Archives.

Many documentary sources are used by low levels of Neighbourhood Plan teams, with between 11-16% using the information, with notable exception of 'Registers and Directories' which are used by 41%. Despite the low uptake of many documentary records, there is clearly an appetite for the information as around a quarter to a third of

communities stated that they could have used them.

Similar to designated asset information held by HERs, cross analysis of the proportions of communities accessing a variety of Archive information against the proportions of the repositories making information accessible revealed no clear correlation between the availability of information and the proportion of communities accessing it. Neither does there appear to be any clear correlation between the specific ways that information made accessible and the number of communities accessing it. Again this suggests that neither the method of accessing information nor its availability appear to be significantly influencing levels of access by Neighbourhood Plan teams.

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[6] (N.B. Analysis of designated assets in Figure 18 above is based on extrapolating the results of the HER questionnaire at a national level, and therefore the results may vary slightly depending on the availability of information from those HERs that did not respond to the questionnaire).

The results suggest that a greater awareness of the information held by Archives, and its application in Neighbourhood Planning could be raised amongst communities either directly or through intermediaries involved in the Neighbourhood Plan-making process.

B1.3 Maps, Images and Media

Maps, images and other media present communities with a wide range of useful resources for the purposes of preparing Neighbourhood Plans. As they are held by Archives, HERs and Museums, understanding the overall levels of accessibility is more complex than for those types of information that are predominantly held by one repository.

The results of the community questionnaire showed that two types of information are commonly used by communities; current maps (86%) and political boundaries (82%), both

of which are fundamental for defining the extents of and understanding the geography of their plan areas. **Although it is unclear where each Neighbourhood Plan team sourced the two types of information from, the number accessing modern maps exceeds that offered by any HER or Archive, therefore indicating that other resources were used**. This may present a missed opportunity for the repositories, as supplying the information presents a chance to establish contact with plan teams and promote additional resources that they hold.

Taking these two sources of information away, responses showed a clear demand for a variety of materials relating to the historic environment. An additional third of communities indicated that they could have made use of historic maps, historic images, architectural drawings & plans and artwork. Furthermore, between 43-50% of respondents indicated that they

could have made use of 'film & video', 'modern aerial photographs' and 'historic aerial photographs'.

Of the reasons for not accessing heritage information only 4% of communities stated that they had not done so because they were unable to access it. The comments support the analysis above, **suggesting that there is no clear correlation between the availability of information from local authority sources and the extent to which it is accessed by communities**. Again, this indicates that the issue of communities not obtaining information may not be related to its physical accessibility.

Figure 19: Comparison of the percentage of communities accessing a selection of Record information with the availability of information from Archives

Figure 20: Comparison of the percentage of communities accessing maps, images and media information with the availability of information from Archives, Museums and HERs

The results arguably demonstrate a thirst for illustrative and visual media, suggesting that communities associate well with these types of information. This may mean that other heritage information could benefit from being provided in a way that uses these types of media (e.g. providing archaeology point data from HERs on historic mapping or aerial photography). The popularity of these types of information implies that their availability would be useful in promoting and encouraging wider public access to heritage information, including by Neighbourhood Plan teams.

B2. Avenues of Access

Results show that communities are sourcing information from resources other than Archives, HERs and Museums. Amongst other issues, this has potential implications for the quality and scope of information accessed, the number of communities

making direct contact with Archives, HERs and Museums and repositories' ability to raise awareness and offer advice about other information useful to Neighbourhood Planning. This Section investigates the broad avenues of access taken by communities, identifying other sources used and considering whether the structure of local government has an influence on how information is being accessed.

B2.1 Local Authority Repositories Accessed by Neighbourhood Plan Teams

Responses to the community questionnaire revealed that **there is a significant gap between the number of Neighbourhood Plan teams that are aware of repositories, and the number that actually source information from them**. Overall the results show

that there are relatively high levels of awareness of each of the three repositories amongst community teams, although up to 1 in 5 responses indicated that they were unaware of their local Museum, and 1 in 10 unaware of their local HER.

As part of the questionnaire Neighbourhood Plan teams were asked to provide the name of the Museum, Archive or HER that they contacted. Closer scrutiny of the results shows that 21% of respondents confused 'local authority HERs' as any source of local heritage information in their replies. Taking these figures into account, only 67% of communities are aware of HERs and only 44% choose to access information from them. The alternative sources of information included local history societies or parish records, as well as the English Heritage National Heritage List and a range of other sources such as the Campaign for the Protection of Rural

England (CPRE), 'Unknown' and 3rd parties who may or may not have accessed local authority holdings on behalf of communities.

The decision not to access known resources indicates that information held by Archives, HERs and Museums was not considered relevant by communities preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, or that information was inaccessible. **The results of the local authority questionnaire clearly show that, in the main, information is very accessible, reducing the likelihood that the issue is one principally concerned with physical access.**

As over 93% of Neighbourhood Plan teams indicated that their plans would consider issues concerning the historic environment, the most likely explanation for communities not accessing information is because they are unaware of the potential applications of heritage information in
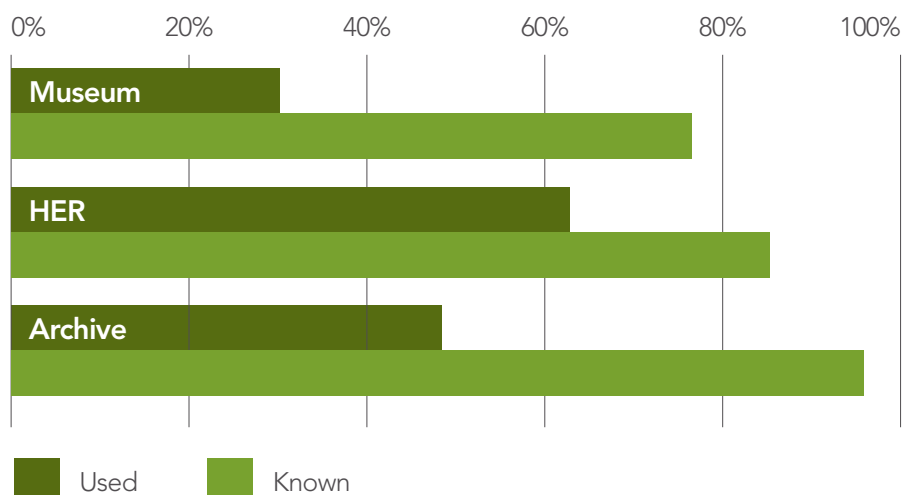
Figure 21: Community knowledge of and access to repository types

the Neighbourhood Planning process. As such **a greater understanding of the types of materials held by Archives, HERs and Museums, as well as their potential applications in Neighbourhood Planning, needs to be raised.**

B2.2 Two tier and Unitary Authorities

Analysis of the proportions of communities accessing information, against the ability of local authority Archives, HERs and Museums to provide it, demonstrated

Figure 22: Percentage of Neighbourhood Plan teams in Unitary and Two-tier local authorities who accessed designated heritage asset information where relevant to their plan areas

that communities are accessing heritage information from other sources. Two types of local designations, conservation areas and local lists, were included in this information, both of which are typically maintained by district authorities in two-tier local governments. This raises the question of whether information is being accessed through district authorities as o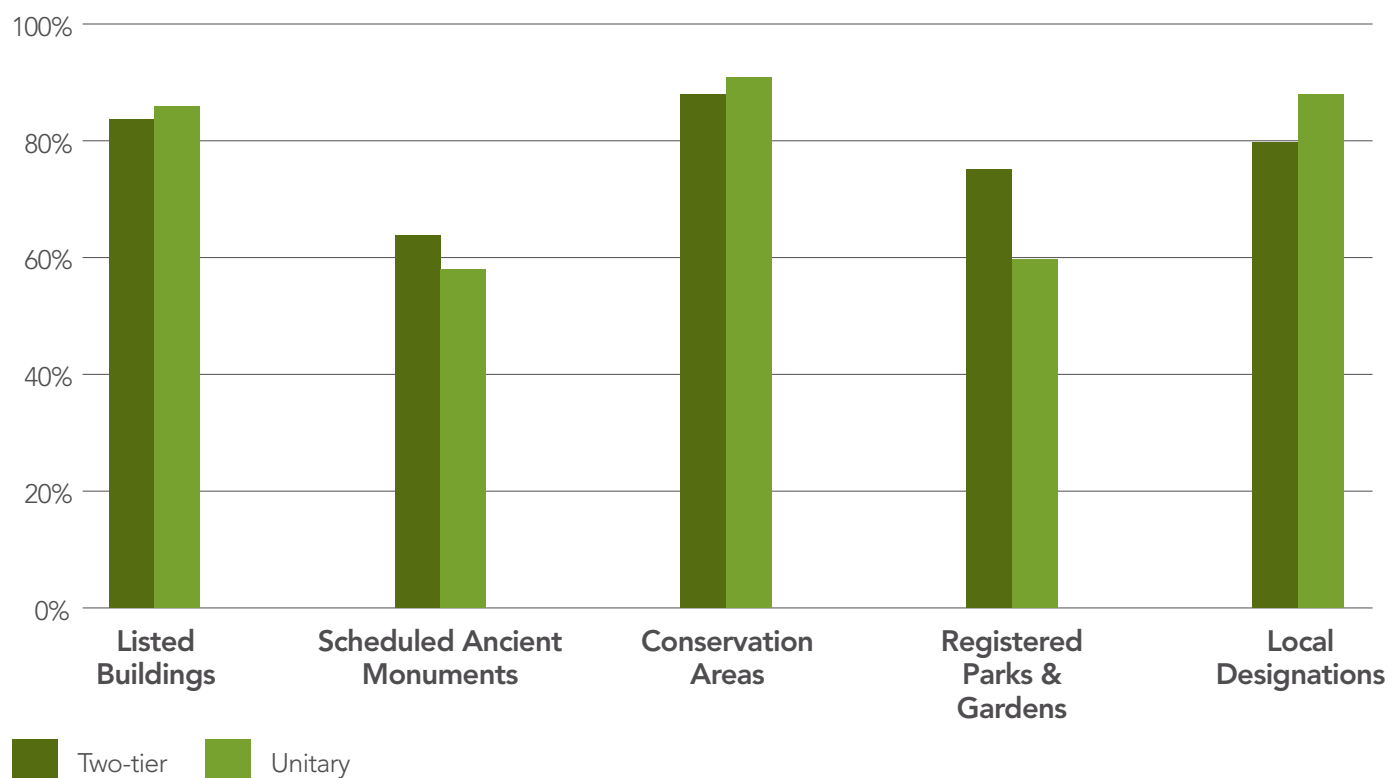pposed to through Archives, HERs and Museums, which are often administered at a county or unitary level and are consequently 'one step removed' from the point of contact between Neighbourhood Plan Teams and local authorities. As only 64% of communities indicated that they accessed HERs, but between 65% and 84% accessed information for listed buildings, SAMs and RPGs, it is highly likely that up to 20% are not obtaining these types of information directly from HERs.

Analysis of the heritage information accessed by Neighbourhood Plan teams located in Unitary and Two-tier local authorities revealed no clear bias in the types of information being accessed. This analysis stands for both designated heritage assets (see above) and more locally based data types.

Although it does not appear to be having an adverse effect on accessibility to information, the provision of heritage information by the second tier of local government is clearly occurring, placing added emphasis on district or comparable authorities. It also raises concerns that wider evidence bases and information held by Archives, HERs and Museums at county level will not find their way into the Neighbourhood Plan process. Case Study 5 provides such an example where access to heritage information is being facilitated at district level and then being used to inform county Archives, Museum and HERs, emphasising the need for collaborative working between the two tiers of local government.
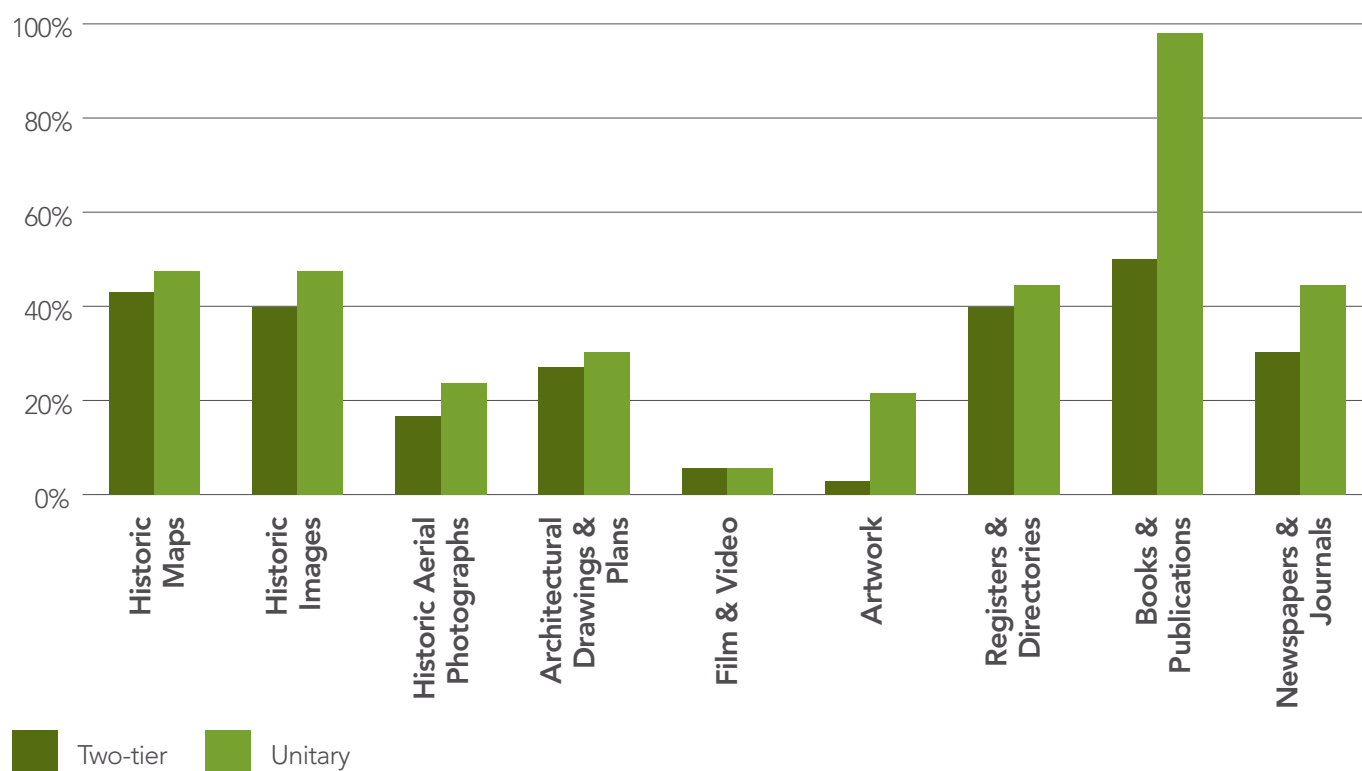

Figure 23: Access to non-designated information by local authority tier
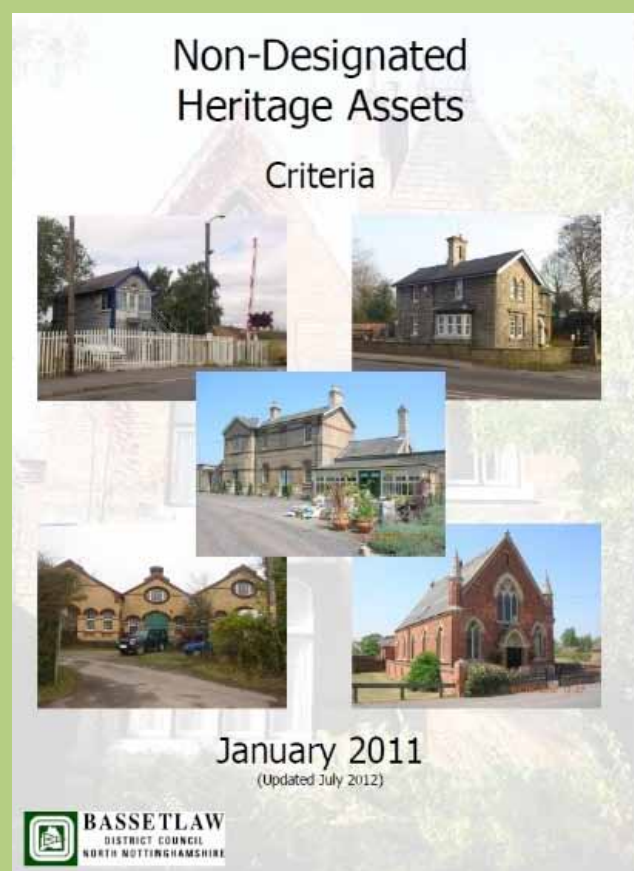
CASE STUDY 5:

Bassetlaw District Council

Neighbourhood Plans prepared in two-tier local authority areas may be required to negotiate multiple sources to acquire information. In the case of the Harworth and Bircotes Neighbourhood Plan in Nottinghamshire, heritage advice was initially sought from Bassetlaw District Council, who provided a map of heritage assets in the parish, historic maps, photographs and building plans, as well as a general overview of the historic development of the area.

Bassetlaw Council's advice with regard to heritage assets is extensive and thorough, with a number of detailed .pdf guides available online, along with useful links to external partners and sources of information. Particular examples of guidance include *Non-designated heritage assets: Criteria*, which provides 'a guide to the criteria used to assess whether a building, structure, settlement, archaeological site, landscape or landscape feature can be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset', and *A Guide to Heritage Impact Assessments*, which provides extensive information about national and local policies regarding the historic environment as well as relevant sources of information and other guidance.

The role of the county council in data provision, where both the HER and Archive are based, is more indirect. Information held at county level for undesignated heritage assets, such as 'unregistered parks and gardens' and 'local interest buildings', is provided to district level authorities, who pass the information on to Neighbourhood Plan teams. Nottinghamshire County Council indicated that archaeological information is provided to district councils for use in conservation area appraisals but has not been specifically requested as a source for Neighbourhood Planning.

Bassetlaw District Council plays a key role in collating and making heritage information accessible to community teams, notably through a planning policy team with a number of officers with heritage backgrounds. The case study emphasises the importance of communication between the tiers of local authorities and the benefits of guidance, frameworks and resources being in-place to facilitate and enable information exchange. Without such resources available there is high potential the information may not be accessed or a similar level of assistance and advice provided.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets Criteria

January 2011
(Updated July 2012)

BASSETLAW
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Summary considerations for community access to Archive, HER and Museum information

- High proportions of Neighbourhood Plan teams wish to engage with heritage issues. However, this is not balanced by the proportion of communities accessing relevant heritage information available to them. As such, their approach to engaging with heritage issues may not be robust or evidence-led, and aspirations may not be met

- High proportions of communities are able to access heritage information, demonstrated by common sourcing information about a core group of nationally and locally designated assets

- Access to information, outside a core group of designated assets, is highly variable and is influenced by awareness of where it is held and its potential applications in planning

- Methods of accessing information vary, although there is a clear preference for web-based material. The cost of accessing hardcopy information was raised as a potential barrier by some communities.

- There is a preference for map-based and spatially arranged information amongst communities

- Certain types of heritage information, such as that about social history and archived records, appear to be infrequently accessed by Neighbourhood Plan teams

- There is a moderate to good awareness of the existence of local authority Archives and Museums, although there is some confusion amongst community groups about the nature of HERs

- Significant proportions of communities are choosing to use national and/or local heritage society and parish records instead of, or alongside, information from Archives, HERs and Museums. Consequently, useful and robust evidence-bases, alongside expertise, held by local authorities are not informing many plans

- A greater understanding of the types of information held by Archives, HERs and Museums, as well as their potential applications in Neighbourhood Planning, needs to be raised

- Effective communication between all levels of local government is essential if community groups are to access and use the full range of heritage information available to them

- There is a need for Archives, HERs and Museums to promote and encourage wider public access to heritage information amongst Neighbourhood Plan teams.

CHAPTER C: COGNITIVE ACCESS

This Chapter considers the logical and intellectual access afforded to Neighbourhood Plan teams accessing information from local authority Archives, HERs and Museums. It considers some of the ways in which information can be accessed and goes on to investigate how information is made accessible according to a series of key routes and techniques.

C1. Community experiences of accessing and interpreting information

In general, communities responding to the questionnaire did not suggest that they had problems with accessing and interpreting heritage information. 60% of communities indicated that they used some form of interpretative report to assist in understanding the local history of their area, and just 5% of Neighbourhood Plan teams indicated that the reason they did not use information was because it required specialist knowledge to use.

The results of the questionnaire showed that a core group of information types, typically about commonly-known designated heritage assets, is being accessed by high numbers of communities undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan, whereas levels of access to other forms of information held by Archives, HERs and Museums are generally lower and less consistent. It might be expected that the more types of information accessed by communities, the greater would be the likelihood that difficulties in interpretation might be encountered, particularly with regard to less commonly used information types such as Historic Landscape Characterisation. Consequently, the results in Figure 24 above should be gauged against the breadth of materials accessed by communities.

Of those Neighbourhood Planning teams which indicated that they had encountered problems with interpretation, none appeared to access comparatively high amounts
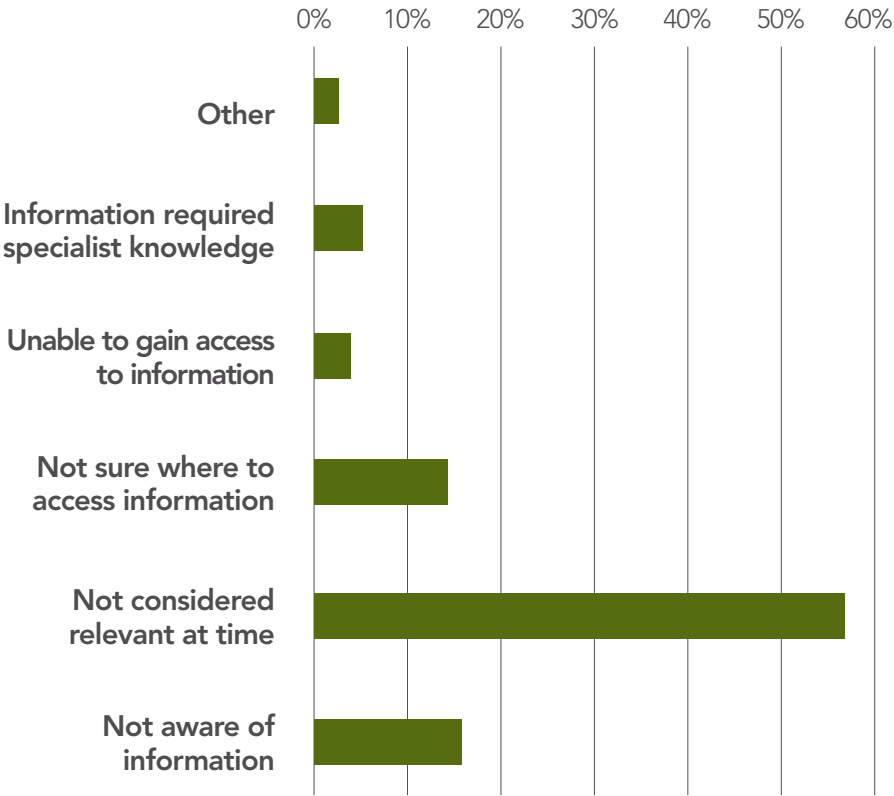

Figure 24: Reasons why heritage information available to Neighbourhood Plan teams was not accessed

of data beyond the core groups of designated heritage assets. Furthermore, none of the teams stated that their members had experience in heritage management issues, suggesting that this may be a factor influencing the ability of teams to interpret information. Correspondingly, in interpreting information, **around 40% of responses indicated that local knowledge or in-house heritage expertise was useful, in particular through input from local history societies**, stressing the potential role that these bodies may have to play in the Neighbourhood Planning process. Importantly, the use of local history groups represents a key step beyond the 'local-knowledge' of Neighbourhood Plan team members. How such organisations are helping access, interpret and, crucially, apply local authority information in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan is unclear. With their input clearly valued by teams, a

"Access to relevant information has not proven to be a problem. The sheer volume of it has! Consequently the ability to derive a concise, pertinent and digestible community profile of heritage information is extremely time consuming."
Saltash Neighbourhood Plan

greater understanding of their role followed by investment into training and guidance, may well be of significant benefit to the uptake and use of heritage information in Neighbourhood Plans.

Approximately a third (29%) of Neighbourhood Plan teams sought assistance from local authority staff and/or external organisations to assist with the interpretation of information.

"No problems, local history society and Museum staff very useful in our searches".
Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan

Together with local history societies, the results showed a reliance of Neighbourhood Plan teams on heritage expertise, whether in-house or external, to assist them in interpreting information. As many communities appear to be using local resources, rather than those held by local authorities, it is likely that there is much more opportunity for assistance to be provided by repository staff than is currently the case. Furthermore, direct and unmediated access to information, in particular Online access, will place added emphasis on in-house resources at the community level, as it is unlikely that local authority staff will be directly engaged as part of the process of sourcing information.

Several communities responding to the questionnaire indicated that their main problem was not accessing information, but acquiring the resources required to arrange and interpret information for preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Suggestions to provide information in a more intuitive and accessible format included a parish synopsis. This is provided by some authorities (see Case Study 7), and the decision of some Neighbourhood Plan teams to use local history resources may indicate a desire for heritage information to be provided in more approachable and easily digested formats.

"In an ideal world a report of the historic environment at parish level, from a single source, that listed buildings, monuments etc. This would have made life easier and would have ensured that they were not only protected but more actively included in the plan". **Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan**

C2. Cognitive routes to information

This Section considers some of the implications for cognitive access to heritage information held by Archives, HERs and Museums. The analysis uses the understanding of how physical access to information is achieved and considers where this enables or undermines the ability of the user to cognitively access information relevant to a Neighbourhood Plan area. Due to the many ways that websites enable users to search for, view, navigate and download heritage information, emphasis is placed on access to information held online.

As shown by the results discussed below, cognitive accessibility of Online information relies heavily on the logical nature of website interfaces, standing guidance and instructions, as opposed to the face-to-face contact and assistance that is available by Remote Enquiry or Visit. In addition, the structures by which heritage information is held can often dictate how it can be logically accessed.

C2.1 Breadth of Access

As earlier analysis showed, the methods by which information is made available can have a significant influence on the level and amount of information accessed. Many Archives and Museums stressed that significant proportions of their collections do not have digital catalogues. Likewise, a considerable amount of HER information is not available Online. Instead, heritage information is clearly most accessible by Visit, with all repositories consistently stating the value of staff assistance in accessing and interpreting records.

"On personal visit users can access catalogue not available online and source references. Also seek one to one guidance from staff members."
Northumberland Archive

Consequently, many sources of information that may be useful for the purposes of Neighbourhood Planning and other initiatives may get overlooked if they are not sufficiently well signposted to.

The quality and breadth of Online access may have implications for the Remote Enquiries and Visits to Archives, HERs and Museums, as internet research is often likely to a be a motivating factor in encouraging users to pursue more intensive forms of enquiry. This may be particularly true if initial online research provides information, such as catalogue numbers, that may enhance or simplify the experience of the user when they come to request material in person. In many instances, if

this information is not provided by the enquirer a search fee may be applicable.

C2.2 Point of Contact

Analysis of both community and local authority questionnaire responses demonstrated the benefits of staff assistance and guidance to communities in accessing information held by Archives, HERs and Museums. The responses also indicated that this form of assistance is widely used by communities.

Whilst members of the public will interact with staff through a Visit and Remote Enquiry, the Online offer comes without their assistance, and the breadth of information available is lower. However, Online resources present the most accessible method to establish contact and gain an understanding of what information is available. Questionnaire feedback from local authority repositories indicated that websites frequently form the first point of contact for researchers. As only limited amounts of material are typically available or searchable Online, there is an essential interdependence between the methods of enquiry that must be established in order for communities to become aware of and go on to access the full breadth of resources available for their local area.

As such the ability for communities to effectively access, navigate and interrogate online resources will have a fundamental influence on their ability to interpret and use information held by Archives, HERs and Museums.

Where local authorities do not have a specific homepage for heritage services (i.e. a hub from which other heritage information pages can be accessed), pages about heritage can often be located in several different areas of a council's website (see Case Study 2). As previously discussed in Section A2.1, this reduces the effectiveness of the browsing experience, but also it serves to dislocate heritage information from certain contexts that might otherwise encourage its interpretation and understanding of its potential applications. Moreover, the segregation of some types of information from others means that users are less likely to encounter other types of heritage information, in particular those which are less commonly known and not purposefully sought for.

The emergence of websites providing combined Archive, HER and Museum information through a single website interface demonstrates the potential value of taking an integrated approach to providing information. Such interfaces can immediately show an array of holdings available to view or search Online, including that which might not have otherwise been explicitly searched for. The approach also has the ability to increase understanding of the synergies between heritage information held by local authorities repositories and how it relates to individual places. This is particularly clear where results are displayed on a map interface (see Case Study 1). However, analysis of repository websites shows that map-interfaces are often heavily selective in the amount and type of information they display. Nonetheless, combined interfaces potentially offer the greatest level of cognitive access, as they actively encourage the user to familiarise themselves with the full breath of heritage information offered by local authority repositories.

Although the 'traditional' approach of maintaining hyperlinks between webpages can overcome some of the issues with information being fragmented between different areas of websites, a review of websites showed that many related pages were poorly signposted, if at all, including major national resources such as the Heritage Gateway. Although useful, signposting requires users to navigate multiple web-pages and does not provide a comprehensive or unified picture of the resources available.

C2.3 Searching Terms: Criteria, Language, and Terminology

As part of the project, Archives, Museums and HERs were asked whether their records could be searched using some basic search criteria. The results showed that very high levels of information held by Archives and, to a slightly lesser degree, HERs can be searched both geographically and by topic/type. HERs are only marginally less accessible with less than 10% fewer HERs capable of searching information using the same criteria. It is likely that this discrepancy can
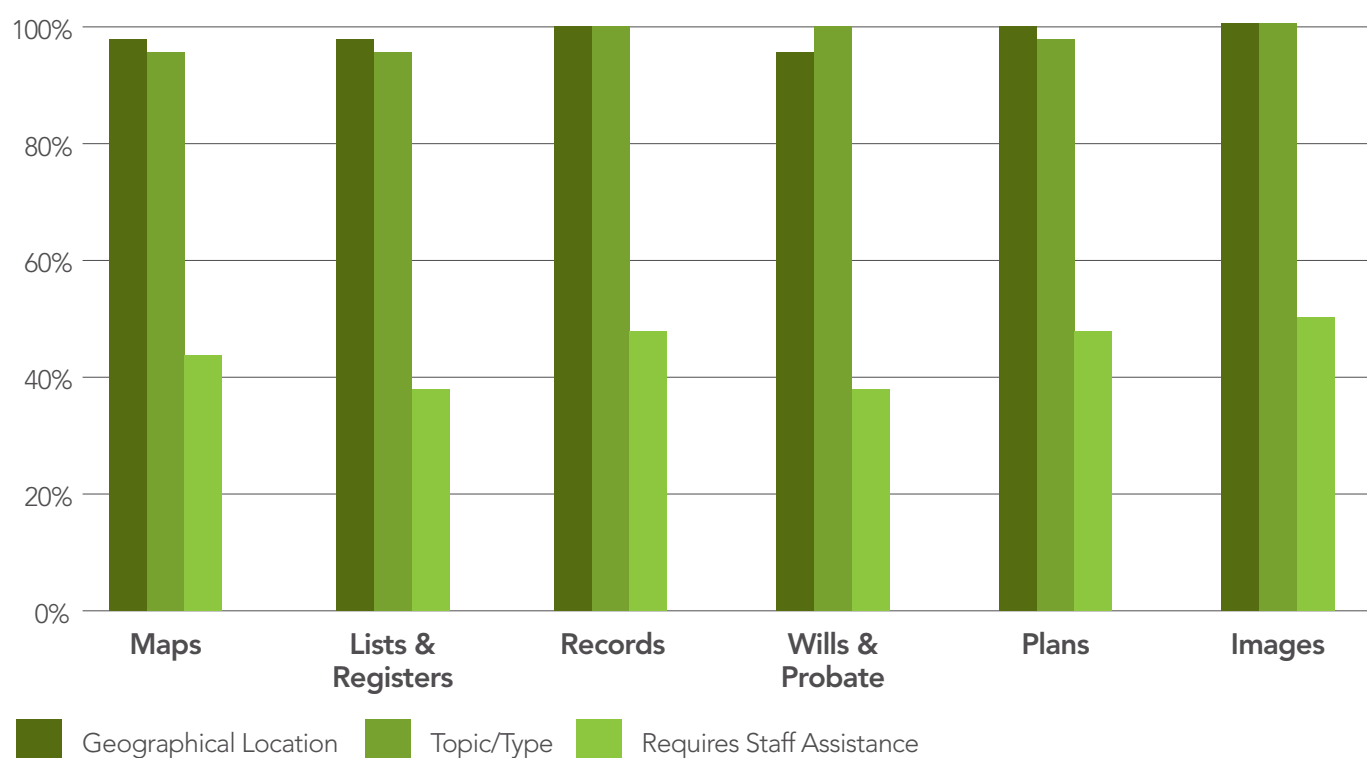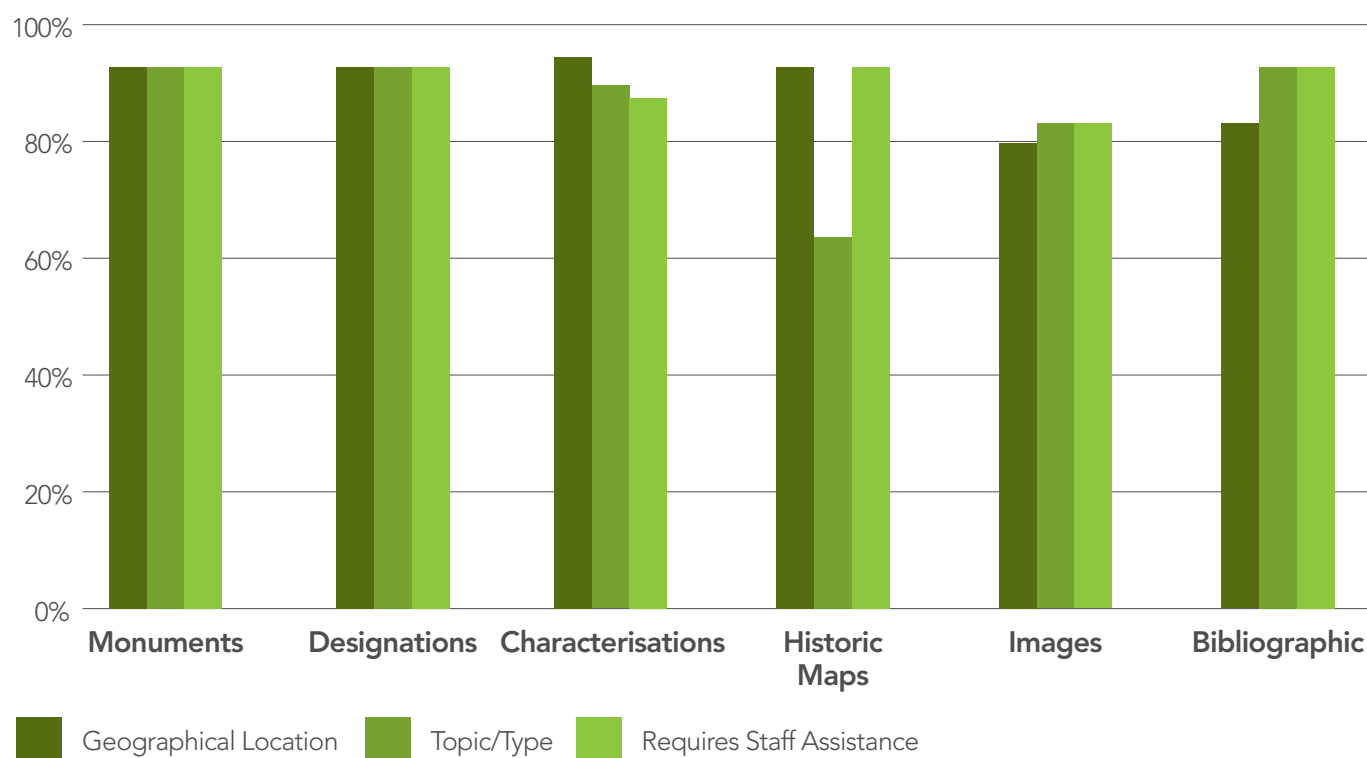
Figure 25: Proportion of selected Archive (above) and HER (below) information able to be searched for by topic/type or geographical location, with an indication of whether this typically requires staff assistance

be accounted for by the 10% of HERs that do not provide facilities for visitors. As such **both HERs and Archives are able to offer high levels of access to communities wishing to search their collections by a relevant topic or theme, or by location.**

The ability to search Archive and HER collections by location promotes a straightforward and logical approach for communities wishing to undertake research for their local areas. The high proportion of Archives and HERs able to search by location across their collections also means that there is considerable scope for making information available using mapped interfaces or according to administrative area, such as parishes. However, this will depend on the spatial accuracy of catalogue entries.

The broad structures used by Museums to exhibit information shows that location is rarely employed, with the focus instead being on particular themes, topics and, to a lesser extent, the display of collections chronologically. As previously discussed, this is likely to mean that communities visiting Museums will need to look to stored collections to access information specific to their local areas. **This emphasises the need for visitors to Museums to be able to make links between representative examples of displayed objects and the heritage of their local areas.** As with Archives and HERs, the ability to search Museum catalogues will be constrained by the metadata recorded. The specific structures
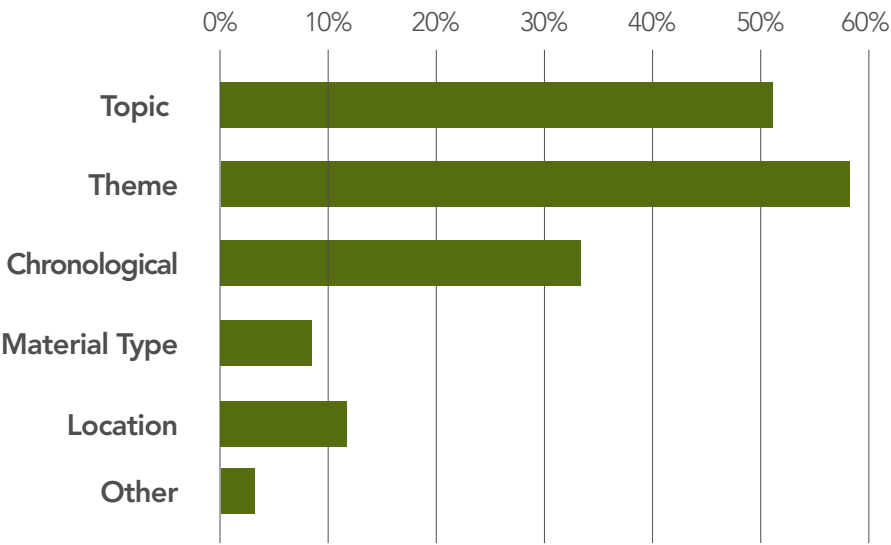

Figure 26: Typical structures of exhibited Museum collections

of Museum catalogues were not subject to investigation as part of the study.

Overall the results suggested that interrogation of stored collections held by Museums will provide communities with information pertinent to their area. However, as the level of interpretive material that accompanies stored collections is unlikely to be of the same level provided for displayed artefacts, communities may struggle to interpret information without assistance of guidance.

C2.4 Search Functionality

The review of Archive, HER and Museum websites allowed for some deeper analysis of the functionality of online search interfaces. Given the key role that they have to play as an a initial point of contact for many enquiries, it is likely that their structure and functionality will influence the ability of users to access information directly, their awareness of other types of information, and their understanding of the information available for their local area. Although particularly

"As most general public users will never before have encountered a sophisticated relational database with integrated GIS, there is no point in expecting the visitor to use the HER database and GIS for themselves. Accordingly, we normally carry out the database and GIS search for them. In many instances we will already have supplied them with the results of a search, and the visit is to follow up from that. Our input is about telling the visitor things they cannot find out about online, and also allows a dialogue in which what they really want or need can be teased out. We often give them basic advice about what they can get from the Archives and Museums Services and how to go about that." **Shropshire HER**

Figure 27: Negative free text search result returned for 'Lincoln Cathedral'

important in terms of the ability to search for and interpret information, **the level of technical language, criteria and terminology used throughout websites will also influence on the user's overall experience of trying to access information.**

Online search interfaces often have a tiered approach, with an initial 'basic' free text search offered, followed by a more 'advanced search' with a range of criteria. Search criteria vary both according to the type of repository, but also within groups of repositories, resulting in an inconsistent approach. More advanced search criteria appeared to reflect the structure of catalogue metadata. In the case of many HERs, an extensive thesaurus is often provided as a drop down list with a selection of specialist criteria that, although providing the ability to search with a high degree of precision, is difficult to navigate without an extensive understanding of the historic

environment. At the other end of the scale, but likely as a consequence of the detailed structure of databases behind website front ends, even the most basic free text searching of simple names and terms does not necessarily provide results.

This was demonstrated by a search for 'Lincoln Cathedral' on the National Heritage List for England, which returned no matches regardless of the permutations of word matches used. The correct title for the entry was the 'Cathedral Church of St Mary and Cloisters and Chapter House and Libraries'.

C2.5 Staff Assistance

The results in Figure 25 showed that on average people visiting HERs are twice as likely as those visiting Archives to require staff assistance in accessing collections, both physically and cognitively. Breakdowns of the type of assistance typically offered by each of the repositories is discussed below.

"The public will almost always ask a staff member, even when guidance is available"
Cheshire Archive

The results showed that HERs typically provide assistance to members of the public in the interpretation of information and by providing additional local knowledge. This type of assistance is most commonly provided for monument and designation data, although other information types also typically require assistance. Help with IT skills is slightly higher for those information types typically held in GIS, although the overall percentages of HERs typically giving this type of assistance varied between 25-43% showing that, in the main, IT systems are accessible.

"Archivists and Local Studies Assistants are also available to provide further information to aid interpretation of records."
Bexley Archive

Around half of all HERs provide assistance in manual searching of all types of information, suggesting that holdings are not always arranged in ways that are most accessible to member of the public.

Figure 28: Types of assistance typically provided by HERs to a visiting member of the public according to key types of information

A high proportion of Archives provide assistance to members of the public in searching and interpreting all types of information. Assistance with wills and probate information is comparatively lower for all types of assistance; although 79% or more of Archives still provide some level of assistance for this information type. **Similar to HERs, high proportions of Archives typically provide assistance to members of the public for helping to interpret information and for providing additional local knowledge**. Help for Computer/IT skills is typically provided by a lower proportion of between 45-65% of Archives.

Between 68-94% of Archives provide assistance in manual searching of all types of information, indicating that some level of training/familiarisation is required in order for members of
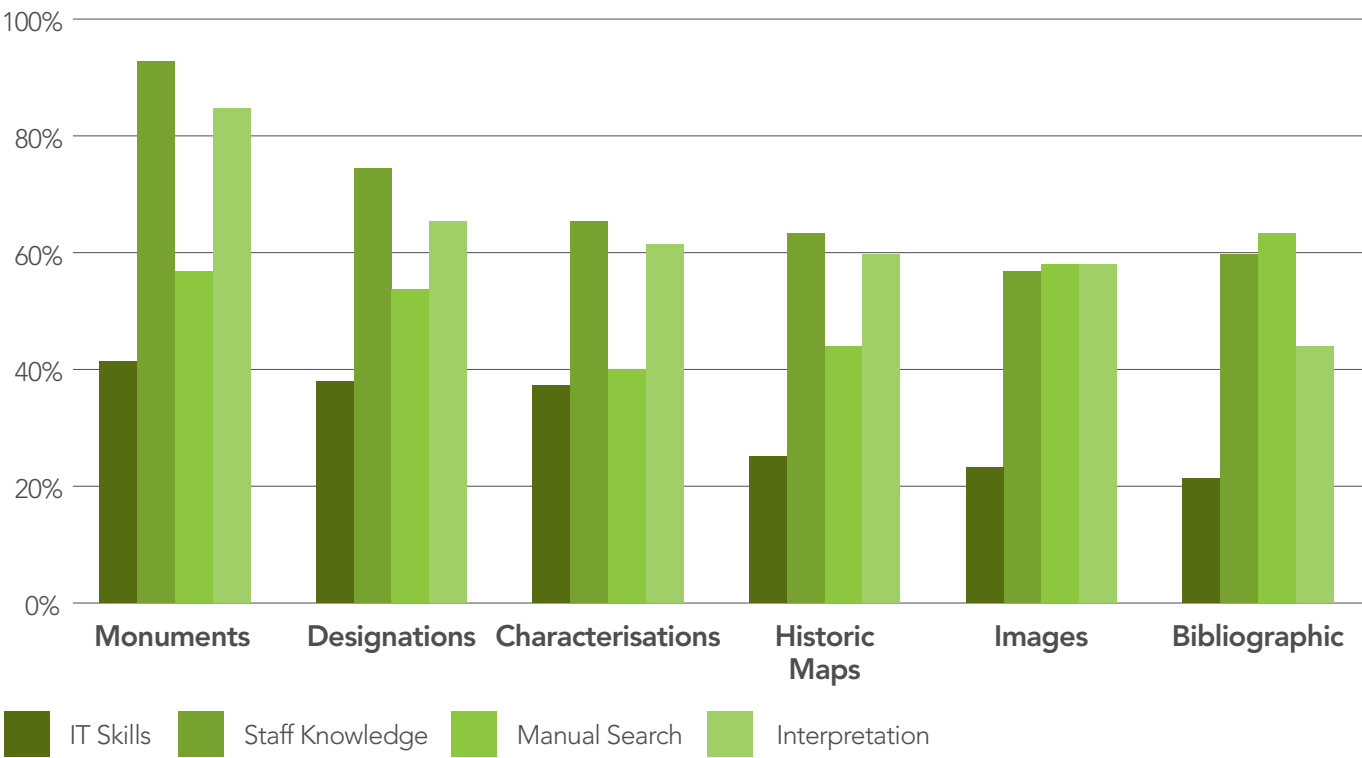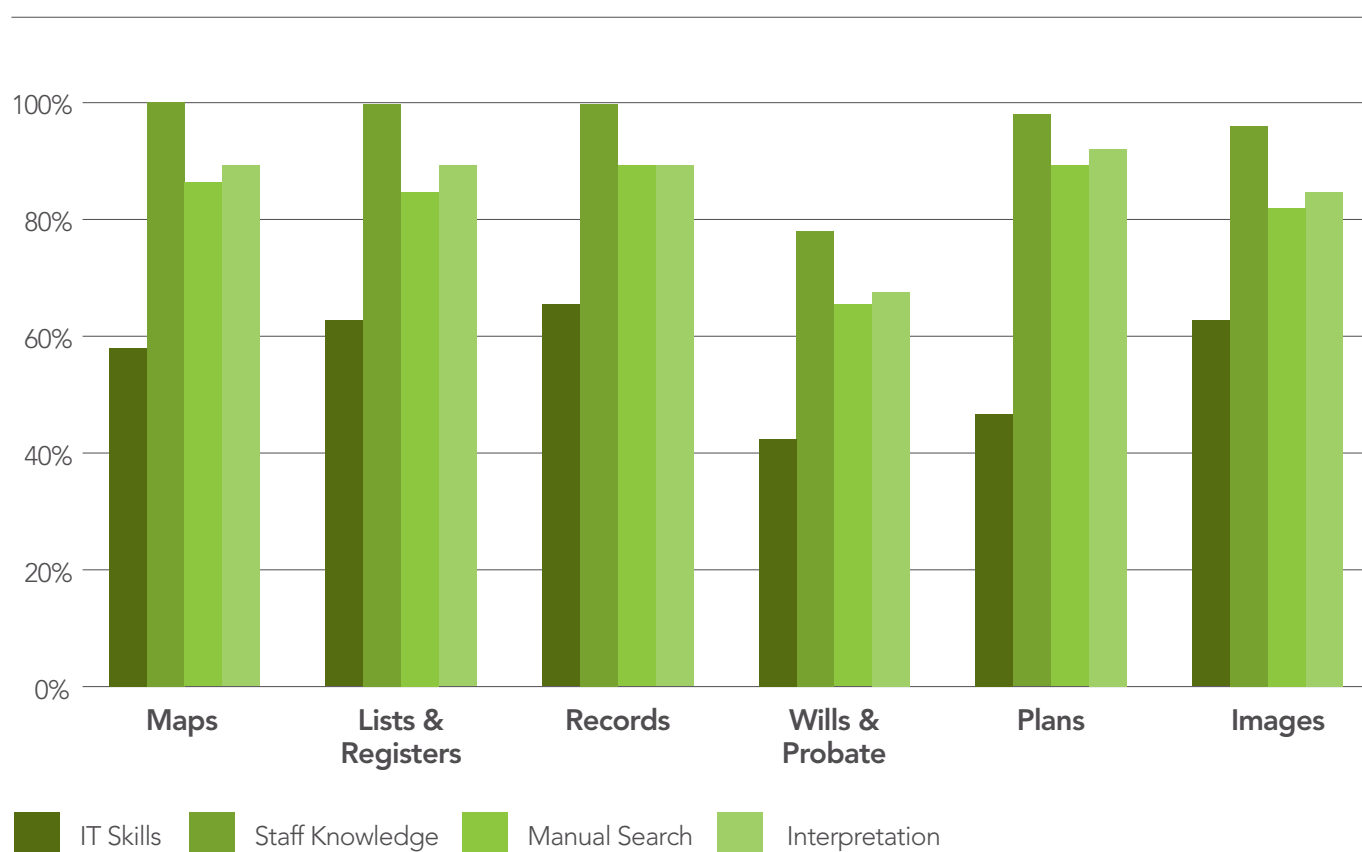
Figure 29: Types of assistance typically provided by Archives to a visiting member of the public according to key types of information

the public to search for and access information relevant to their enquiry.

Assistance provided by Museums, for both displayed and stored collections, is typically in the form of one-to-one assistance and short familiarisation or introductory sessions. Unlike Archives and HERs, help with IT/Computer skills is rarely provided (30% of Museums). Standing guidance is generally limited to displayed items, with only 17% of Museums providing such guidance for stored collections. Technical guidance is provided by approximately one fifth of Museums.

Whether accessing Archive, HER or Museum collections, **the results throughout emphasise the need for staff assistance in retrieving heritage information. Furthermore, they highlight the hurdle that online interfaces must surmount, as staff assistance will not be available online, with communities relying on standing guidance instead.**

C2.6 Aiding interpretation

The results of the local authority questionnaire showed how **Archives, HERs and Museums share some common approaches to assisting with the interpretation of material, but also take individual approaches tailored both to the nature of collections and to the particular requirements of users.**

Two common approaches amongst Archives, HERs and Museums which are aimed at helping members of the public interpret material are staff assistance and the provision of bibliographic resources such as publications, monographs and guidance notes. Both of these are most accessible by Visit, although a slightly lesser degree of assistance is also available by Remote Enquiry. Of note is that significantly fewer Museums are able to offer access to libraries than Archives and HERs (see Figure 11), in part reducing their ability to enable further research.

By their very nature, Museums differ from Archives and HERs in the myriad ways by which they present their collections. Interpretative materials are typically generated as part of an exhibition, often using a variety of media. This can provide a rich seam of interpretation and understanding, albeit for only a proportion of a collection. The typical structure taken by Museum exhibitions means that interpretation is likely to be based around a specific topic or theme which, depending on the line of enquiry, may have implications for its relevance to specific local areas, such as those covered by a Neighbourhood Plan.
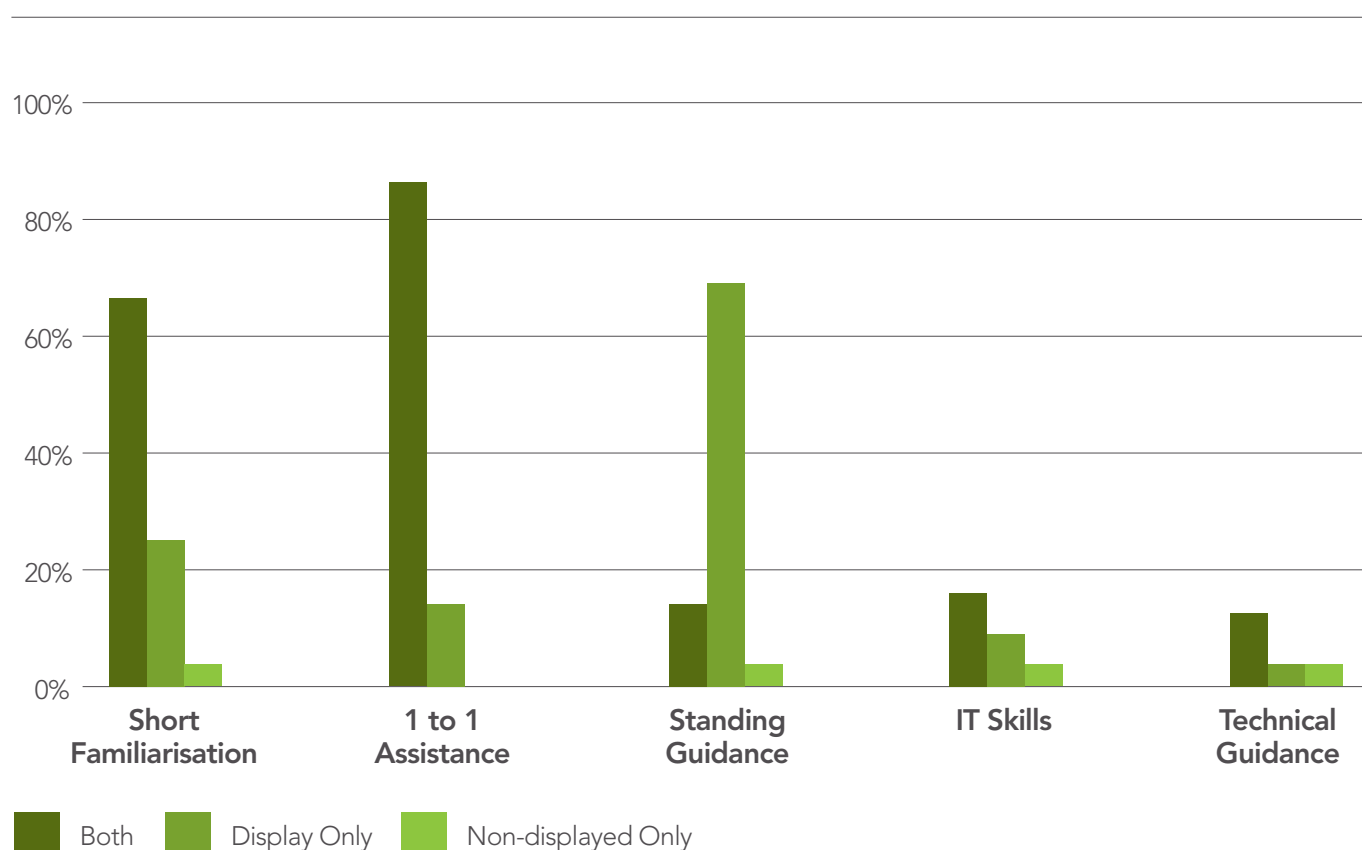
Figure 30: Types of assistance typically provided by Museums to a visiting member of the public according to displayed and stored collections

In addition, interpretive information is only likely to be available throughout the duration of an exhibition, although **one Museum response indicated that exhibitions are typically filmed prior to dismantling, so that they can be accessed at a later date (e.g. online)**. Exhibitions aside, between 50% and 75% of Museums indicated that some form of basic descriptive text can typically be provided for stored items, but standing guidance is rarely available for anything other than exhibited collections.

"We have a number of research notes available on our website about various topics. Archivists and Local Studies Assistants are also available to provide further information to aid interpretation of records." **Bexley Archive**

Mediated information and guidance in the form of topic, area or period based reports is rarely available from Museums. In contrast, many HERs and Archives indicated that they provide them for commonly requested information. Guides commonly include how to research specific topics, use particular sources, and undertake common research enquiries. In the case of Archives, the focus is largely on interpreting information held within directories and registers, and on popular topic-based enquiries such as researching the 'history of your house' or genealogy. HER guidance focuses mainly on the interpretation of monuments, designations and characterisation information, often in the form of technical reports.

Common to both Archives and HERs is a limited amount of information available to help in the interpretation of historic maps, images and bibliographic information, although

"We supply advice and support to individual project requests including reference to standard texts and online resources to ensure that all enquiries are given the tools to interpret the raw data (e.g. HER, Historic Landscape Character) supplied". **Hampshire HER**

a small number of repositories have compiled databases of sources for popular topics. Only one HER of those that responded provides additional information for the interpretation of bibliographic information, and this includes a glossary 'to help lay readers with technical reports' (Bath & North-East Somerset HER).

Approaches to providing guidance appear to vary considerably, with some repositories offering a wide range of resources

CASE STUDY 6:

Trowbridge Museum

Trowbridge Museum is a particularly useful example of the range of services that a Museum can provide. It is built around several distinct collections acquired from local companies, including extensive amounts of material about the local wool trade and associated cloth-making industries. This makes it a potential resource for communities to research the former industrial, social, architectural and employment history of their areas. The Museum website also offers basic information about the landscape and settlement history of the surrounding area, providing contextual information for the Museum collection.

For displayed collections the Museum is able to offer;

- One to one assistance
- Leaflets and relevant literature
- Tours of the Museum
- Request forms for complex queries
- Spot identification of objects people bring into the Museum

For stored collections assistance includes;

- Supervised or unsupervised access to the Museum database
- Viewing of stored items (by appointment)
- Photography of items
- Supervised handling of items

The Museum is run by the town council rather than the local authority, and the Town Strategy (2011) clearly states that "The Town Council should support the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the greater Trowbridge area in conjunction with neighbouring parishes and Wiltshire Council". The local administration of the Museum and the role of the council, coupled with the effective and clear way that Museum information is provided promotes the Museum as a key and accessible resource for Neighbourhood Planning in Trowbridge and the surrounding area.

(e.g. **http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/how-to-guides**), and others offering comparatively few. Archives appear to offer the most consistent and comprehensive approaches of the three repositories, and adopt the widest range of techniques. Guidance offered by HERs appears to be more geared towards the technical examination and use of data than understanding its specific relevance to an area or topic, with information often taking the form of glossaries, research agendas and thesauri. A small number of HERs provide information about how data has been compiled and how it is structured.

Overall the diverse approaches to assisting the interpretation of collections shows that there is significant opportunity for sharing best practice, both between repositories of the same type and amongst Archives, HERs and Museums. There is a clear need for more standing guidance to support the interpretation of heritage information, especially as there is currently a high dependency across all repositories on staff assistance. Encouragingly, common approaches exist and these could form the basis for new methods of cross working and guidance provision.
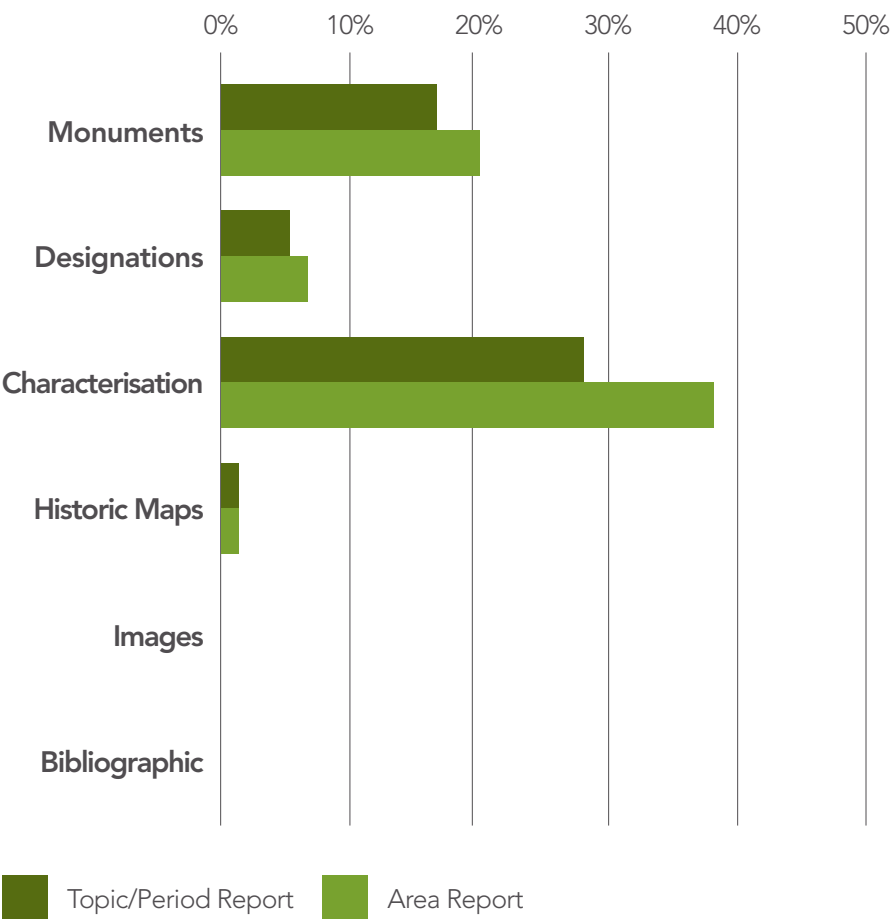
Figure 31: Types of report supplied by HERs

Wiltshire Council makes settlement histories for 261 communities in their local authority area available online. These pages provide a significant resource to communities, and include scans of historic maps, a "thumbnail history" of the settlement, and contact details for council offices. There is also an image search facility which provides a number of both modern and old photographs of the community.

The pages provide links to useful sources, such as pre-defined searches of the council website for written materials about each community, links to old newspapers, the relevant Victoria County History volume for the settlement, and specific locational references for Ordnance Survey maps. More specific resources are made available under the topics of "folk arts," including links to relevant songs and stories, and the history of buildings in the settlement.

A notable feature of these pages is the link to the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record, which opens a pre-entered locational search of HER entries for that community. This is presented as a list of monuments and buildings, which can then be further filtered by the user. As well as the Historic Environment Record, the page also links to the search page of Wiltshire and Swindon Archive service, allowing the user to get a preliminary understanding of the resources available before making a direct enquiry.

Sherston Neighbourhood Plan in Wiltshire is currently subject to a sustainability appraisal, which is accounting for a number of historic features described in their community history page. The chairman of the team

confirmed that the Wiltshire Community Histories page (http://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/getcom2.php?id=201), along with support from the local authority, had served as a key starting point for the plan's consideration of heritage matters. The plan considers scheduled ancient monuments in the parish, conservation areas and listed buildings, and goes on to state that, both for built heritage and archaeological material, "national designation and assessments provide a sound level of protection that could be further enhanced through Neighbourhood Plan policies."

The mediated information and resources, alongside further support from the local authority, clearly proved a useful resource for raising awareness of the historic environment, helping to ensure its inclusion in the Sherston Neighbourhood Plan.

C2.7 Summaries and Filtered information

Pre-defined research reports are employed by several Archives and HERs, although no Museums responding to the questionnaire indicated that they provide them. A review of information available online showed that these reports are typically topic based, but may also be area-based, particularly where provided by HERs. Content varies in detail from simple lists of relevant catalogue or database entries (e.g. listed buildings in an area) to full written interpretative texts and packages of resources (e.g. historic maps, lists of heritage assets). The review of information available online revealed that in a small number of instances information is being combined from two or more repositories, such as Wiltshire (see Case Study 7) where materials are being combined for parishes.

A similar effect can be achieved by presenting heritage information on mapped website interfaces, where users can search and view information by scrolling across maps.

This provides an immediate spatial awareness of the information presented, making it directly relevant to a specific area. However, data arranged in this way does not necessarily present the opportunity for interpretative material about defined places. A work around is provided by **www.heritageconnectlincoln. com** whereby data and mediated information is provided through a series of predefined places.

"The Heritage Connect website information is structured according to the 108 distinct places, or 'Character Areas', defined in the Lincoln Townscape Assessment. Each 'Character Area' is described according to its historical development and its urban form, with emphasis placed on how the traces of previous activity, be it recent or ancient, are manifested in the current character of an area. Written statements produced for each Character Area are factual and objective in content, free from value judgment. By recording information for individual 'Character Areas' the assessment is well placed to consider the concept of 'place', making clear the factors behind an area's evolution as well as its modern day use. There is also Related Information for each CA with Lincoln Heritage Database Monuments, Ecology and the Lincoln Archaeological Research Assessment (LARA). It includes digital images of modern and historical maps."
City of Lincoln HER

Chapter C: Summary Conclusions

- Communities indicated that they do not generally have problems accessing and interpreting heritage information, although this may be due to many only accessing a core group of familiar information about commonly-known heritage assets

- Communities place greatest emphasis on assistance from local authority staff or in-house expertise, in particular local history societies, emphasising their role in plan-making

- A Visit, and to a lesser degree a Remote Enquiry, provides the most comprehensive level of access to information and, through staff input and assistance, interpretation of collections

- Online resources are frequently the first point of contact for researchers and there appears to be a growing interdependence between Online and other forms of access, meaning websites are a key motivating factor in encouraging users to pursue more intensive forms of enquiry

- Information is increasingly being made available through online map interfaces and place based summaries, and area based synopses appear to be a preferred method of accessing mediated information. This process lends itself more to information held by HERs and Archives, than Museums

- On average people visiting HERs are twice as likely as those visiting Archives to require staff assistance in accessing collections

- A number of key issues are associated with providing information online, including:
  - Underlying complex structures in which heritage information is held are influencing how information can be logically accessed online
  - Access is limited to those catalogues and collections held and also displayed digitally
  - The dependence on standing guidance as opposed to staff assistance
  - Users may not gain a full understanding of the information available for their area
  - Information can be fractured between multiple websites or unrelated parts of them, reducing the effectiveness of the browsing experience and dislocating it from certain contexts that might otherwise encourage its interpretation and application
- There are a growing number of websites providing combined Archive, HER and Museum holdings, promoting understanding of the synergies between heritage information and actively encouraging the user to familiarise themselves with a wider range of heritage information
- Archives, HERs and Museums share some common approaches to assisting with the interpretation of material, but also take individual approaches tailored both to the nature of collections and also to the particular requirements of users:
  - Assistance is less available by Remote Enquiry, and even more so Online
  - Museums have a strong emphasis on access to exhibited items, but much less do for stored collections, and use a wide range of techniques to enable cognitive access
  - Archives appear able to provide the most consistent and comprehensive support across their holdings
  - HERs appear to focus on assisting the interpretation of a core group of information, and on the technical examination and use of data
  - There is limited guidance to help in the interpretation of certain types of information
  - Search criteria vary both according to the type of repository, but also within groups of repositories leading to an inconsistent approach
  - Pre-defined research reports according to topic or place, and in a small number of instances information is being combined from two or more repositories.
- There is significant opportunity for sharing best practice, both between repositories of the same type and amongst Archives, HERs and Museums.
- There is a clear need for more standing guidance to support the interpretation of heritage information, especially as there is a high dependency on staff assistance.

CHAPTER D: AWARENESS

Awareness amongst community teams of the many types of historic environment information held by Archives, HERs and Museums is a key 'first step' to encouraging its uptake and use in Neighbourhood Planning.

Furthermore, an awareness of its potential applications in community-led plans is essential to ensuring its access, interpretation and integration in the plan-making process. The results of the community questionnaire show that **there is an inconsistent understanding of what information is available from local authority Archives, HERs and Museums, and general unfamiliarity with the role the historic environment in Neighbourhood Planning.**

"The plan is concerned more with current and future issues faced by the community than with the past. Thus the historic environment is not a main issue for the plan". **Billesdon Neighbourhood Plan**

This Chapter considers the levels of awareness amongst Neighbourhood Plan teams of the information available from Archives, HERs and Museums, as well as its potential applications in the plan-making process. It goes on to investigate a number of factors that may be influencing awareness, such as the use of guidance and the availability of expertise and skills within plan teams.

"Local people involved include members of Local History and Civic societies and the level of information implied by the questions does not seem particularly relevant to producing a Neighbourhood Plan."
Neston Neighbourhood Plan

Not all Neighbourhood Plans are intending specifically to consider issues about the historic environment of their area. The approach of plans also varies in scale, with some setting out high-level strategic development policies across wider areas (e.g. the Eden Valley Neighbourhood Plan) and others targeting individual buildings, villages and localised areas within individual parishes or settlements in fine detail (e.g. Norland Neighbourhood Plan). Nonetheless, over 93% of communities suggested that their plans would directly consider issues concerning the historic environment.

Furthermore, as shown by Case Study 8, although some plans may be strategic in structure, the localised outcomes of policies should be considered as part of a Sustainability Appraisal (SA). While SAs are not required (although a Strategic Environmental Assessment may be), it is good practice to consider the potential social, economic and environmental impacts of planning policies (PAS, 2013)[7], a process that would be helpfully informed by a comprehensive understanding of the historic environment.

D1. Key topics considered by Neighbourhood Plans

The results of the questionnaire showed that in general communities have common intentions in terms of the range of broad heritage and heritage-related topics that their plans engage with. The results confirmed the central role that many aspects of the historic environment can have to play in the creation and implementation of Neighbourhood Plans. Moreover, responses showed that communities intend to engage with a wide range of issues that affect the historic environment of their plan areas, emphasising the need to access a range of information in order to take an evidence-led approach to preparing plans.

Figure 32 shows that between 79-98% of communities are engaging with a wide range of heritage related topics, with exception of 'Social History' (34%). The results are arguably unsurprising as the Localism Act and much associated guidance at a central level, emphasises the role of Neighbourhood Plans as a way of influencing the location and style of new development (i.e. physical/material aspects). **This means that there is a potential risk that social history is being overlooked in favour of more tangible heritage, potentially de-personifying or dehumanising the fabric of places, and leading to a misunderstanding or undervaluation of their historical significance and social identity, and the heritage assets within them.**

Relative analysis of topics showed that plans are most concerned with the 'location and style of new development' and 'local character', emphasising a strong role for heritage information concerned with wider areas such as landscapes and townscapes. Of note is that over three quarters of communities are engaging with issues about conservation and restoration, demonstrating that Neighbourhood Plans are not only being used to guide future new development, but as a tool to regenerate and conserve the existing historic fabric of places.

[7] http://www.pas.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning/-/journal_content/56/332612/4078383/ARTICLE

At the time of writing, the Woburn Sands Neighbourhood Plan is open for consultation. In their response to the questionnaire, the team indicated that they did not use information from their local Archive, Museum or HER. However, the plan shows that heritage information was sourced, including guidance from Milton Keynes Council. The plan includes a Design Guide as an appendix in order to support policies about their conservation area, which featured prominently in their plan-making;

"Woburn Sands benefits from the fact that much of the central area is classified as a Conservation Area. Where appropriate the principles underlying this area will be extended to cover the whole of the parish over the next few years. Developments should also conform to relevant Government guidelines relating to construction sustainability."

Policy WS1 All developments in the town (including any extensions to individual properties) will be expected to comply with the Design Guide appended to this Plan (Appendix 3)"

The plan contains no other policies regarding the wider historic environment, including either designated or undesignated archaeological remains. This may demonstrate issues of accessibility to or availability of guidance; however the team produced an historical context document to inform the Sustainability Appraisal of the plan, which included a preliminary list of notable local buildings of historic interest, as well as a brief description of settlement evolution, landscape character and social history. Furthermore, the historic environment is clearly valued by the community, with a representative of the team indicating:

"Various individuals have written pamphlets etc., most of which are in our local Library or in the Town Council records. Fortunately about five years ago a local historian wrote a pamphlet

entitled "The Woburn Sands Heritage Trail" which brought together most of the material. The Town Council paid for its publication and issued a copy to every house in the town."

The case study shows that although heritage information was accessible it was predominantly used to assess the sustainability of the plan, as opposed to playing a central role in the development of its policies or recommendations. The case study also confirms that heritage information is being accessed through alternative avenues by some communities. Furthermore, its shows that where an active local history group exists, it may be that communities feel no need to go further in search of information.
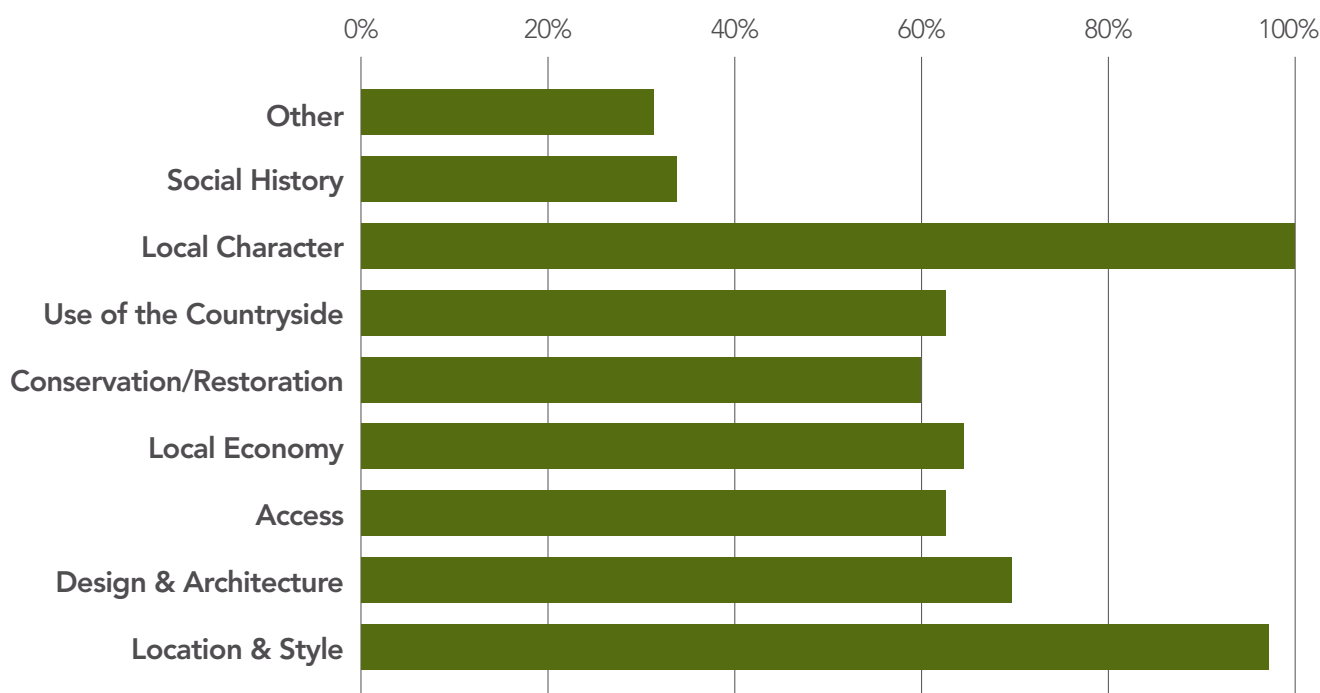
Figure 32: Percentage of Neighbourhood Plans engaging with key topics

Similarly, the high proportions of communities tackling issues about 'access' and 'use of the countryside' emphasises the scope of plans, which include not just the built-up areas or developing areas, but the nature of the hinterland and movement in and around it. This demonstrates the usefulness and importance of heritage information about both urban and surrounding undeveloped areas (e.g. rural) being used in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

Other topics (32%) included many issues directly or indirectly related to the historic environment. Of these other topics, transport, green infrastructure, sustainable energy, health and education were the most commonly included. Many of these issues have been the topic of specific heritage guidance at national if not local level, emphasising the need to raise its profile and accessibility to Neighbourhood Plan teams.

D2. Key topics of information and land use in plan areas

In broad terms Neighbourhood Plan areas contain an average of between 3 and 4 land use types. These include Residential (82% of plans), Farmland (84%) and/or Settlement Centres (79%), and to a lesser extent Woodland (48%) and Industrial (30%) land uses. Where there is a clear relationship between the land use within an area and key topics of information accessed, cross analysis

showed that between 65% and 100% of plan teams are accessing information relevant to their areas.

Where information was not accessed, fewer than 12% of plan teams state that it was not applicable. For example, 76% of Neighbourhood Plans with settlement centres in their areas accessed heritage information about 'settlement character' and 21% consider that it could have been used in hindsight. Likewise, 73% of plans in rural areas accessed information about 'rural character', and 18% consider that it could have been used. In both examples, no community stated that it was "not applicable" to their plan.

The results differed with respect to the number of Neighbourhood Plan teams accessing archaeological information. **Although between 71-100% of teams believe it to be relevant, only an average of 48% of them have actually accessed information, with 12% to 37% stating that it could have been useful.**

Key Topics of Information

- Archaeology
- Buildings
- Settlement Character
- Rural Character
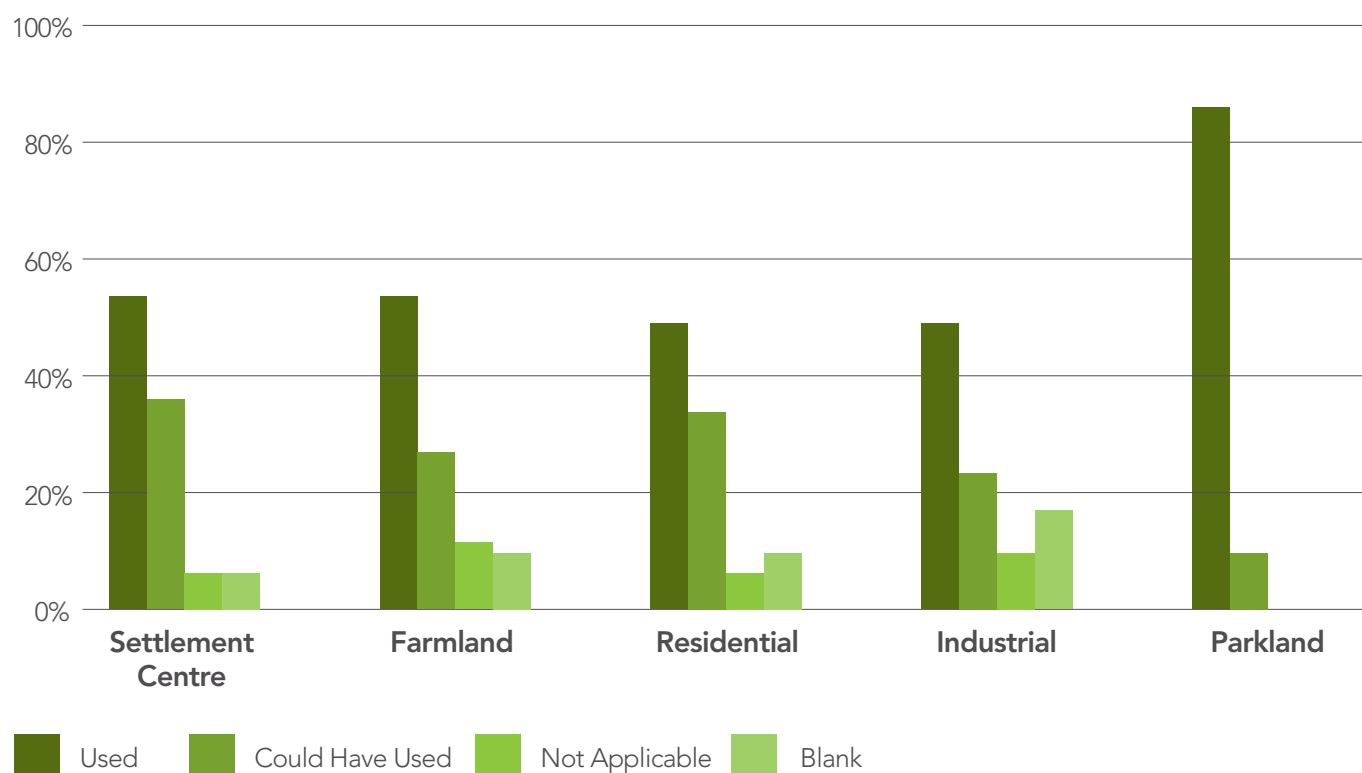- Parks, Allotments & Gardens

Figure 33: Percentage of Neighbourhood Plan teams accessing archaeological information according to key land uses in their plan areas

At this broad level of analysis the results showed that high proportions of communities are accessing information relevant to the land uses in their area, however there remains significant potential for more information to be used in Neighbourhood Planning, in particular that concerning archaeology. The results also indicated a clear demand amongst teams who are currently not accessing information, reinforced by a low number of communities stating that the information is not applicable.

D3. Actual and Potential Levels of Access

As part of the study Neighbourhood Plan teams were asked whether they had accessed, or intended to access, various types of heritage information available at Archives, HERs and Museums. Where information was

not accessed, communities were asked whether, in retrospect, they felt it could have been useful or if they believed it was not-applicable to the plan-making process. The results give an insight into those types of heritage information for which there is greater appetite than is indicated by levels of access, and highlights where communities may be unaware of the potential application of information in the plan-making process.

D3.1 Designated Heritage Assets

Earlier analysis showed that high proportions of Neighbourhood Plan teams are using information about both nationally and locally designated heritage assets where relevant to their plan areas (see Section B1.1 and Figure 34)

The results of the questionnaires are moderated according to whether information was relevant to or

was available for their local areas. Examination of the community questionnaire responses in their raw format showed that there is greater appetite for information about designated heritage assets, and that in retrospect many communities felt that they could have accessed information.

Comparison of the two sets of results shows that there are issues with both the awareness and availability of information. In the case of locally designated assets greater numbers of communities used or wanted to use the information than was available. This conclusion was confirmed by examination of the availability of local authority evidence-bases, with many not maintaining local lists. **The results clearly define a need for local authorities to compile, maintain and make accessible lists of locally designated heritage assets.**
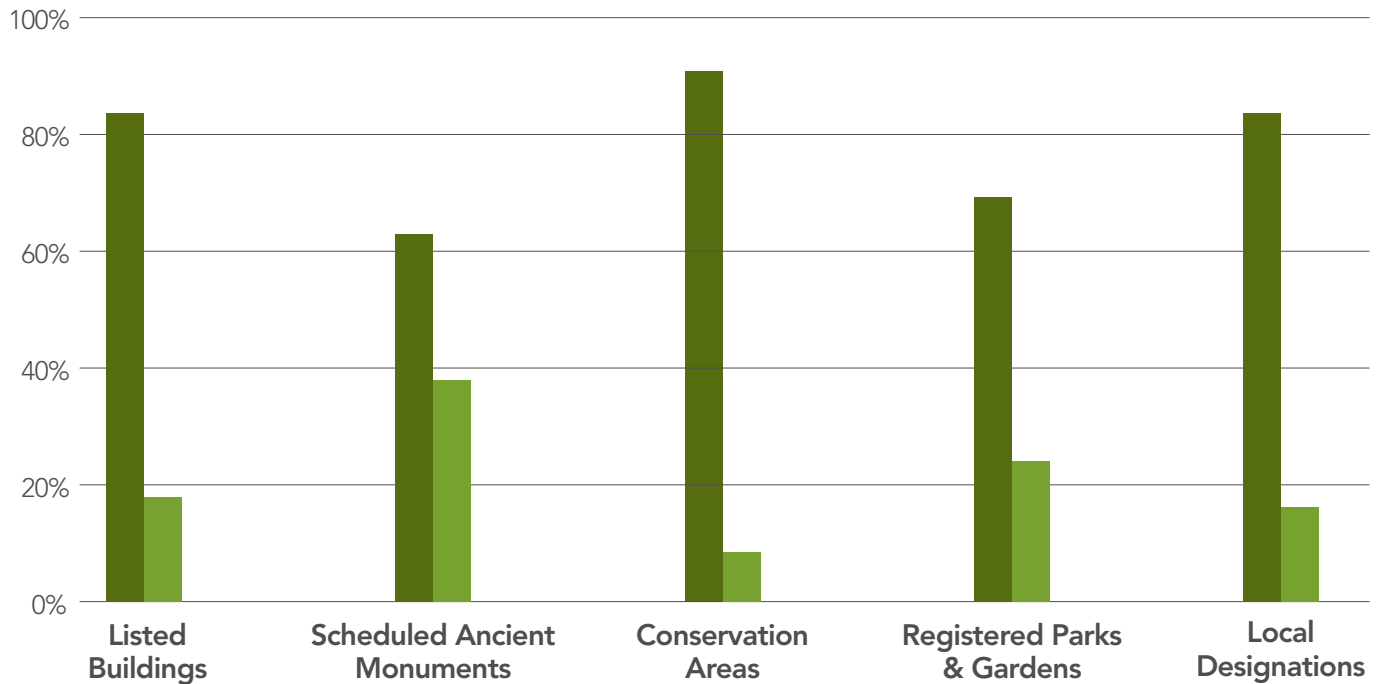
Figure 34: Percentage of Neighbourhood Plan teams accessing and not accessing information about designated heritage assets where relevant to their plan areas
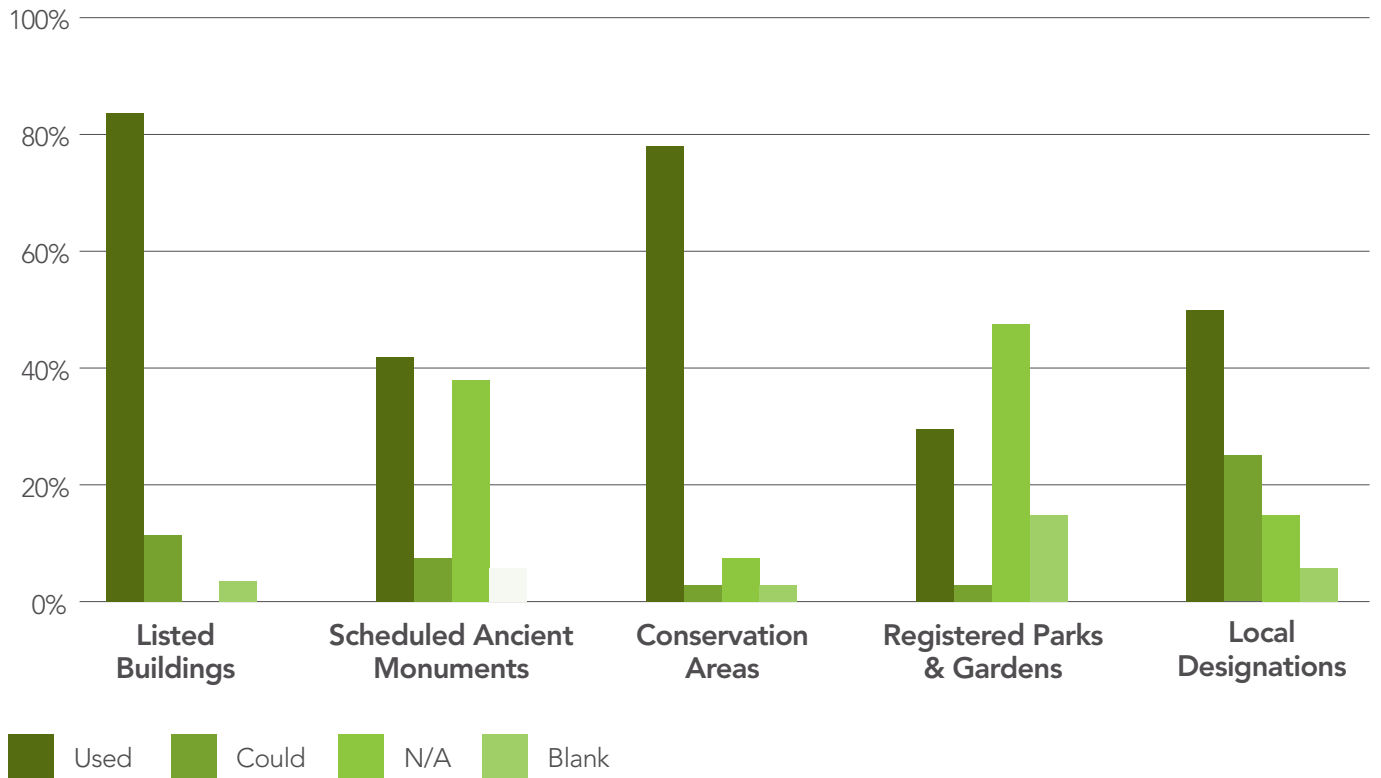

Figure 35: Percentage of Neighbourhood Plan teams indicating whether information about designated heritage assets was used, could have been used or was not considered applicable in the plan-making process

With regard to other designated assets, comparison of the two graphs shows that greater numbers of communities could be accessing information about most designated heritage assets, in particular registered parks and gardens and SAMs. In the majority of cases information is not used because it is considered to be irrelevant to the purposes of the plan. Deeper analysis of the plan areas for those communities that considered that information was not applicable shows that SAMs are present in 27% of them and registered parks & gardens (RPGs) in 18%. One plan area (Figure 36) includes 31 SAMs, comprising standing earthwork monuments such as barrows and medieval settlement remains.

As high proportions of communities are able to access both nationally and locally designated assets, routes to heritage information appear to be open, suggesting that the issue is the inconsistent approach amongst communities in sourcing information about designated heritage assets. Locally designated assets appear to be the main exception to this, with nearly one in three communities believing that the data would have been of use to their plan. **The fact that SAMs and RPGs are not being considered shows that information about significant heritage assets is being overlooked by around one third of Neighbourhood Plans.**

D.3.2 Maps, Images and Media

There is a clear demand for a variety of information about the historic environment, with between 40-50% of Neighbourhood Plan teams making use of historic maps, modern aerial photographs and historic images. Furthermore, between 32-43% of teams indicated that in hindsight the same information could have been useful.
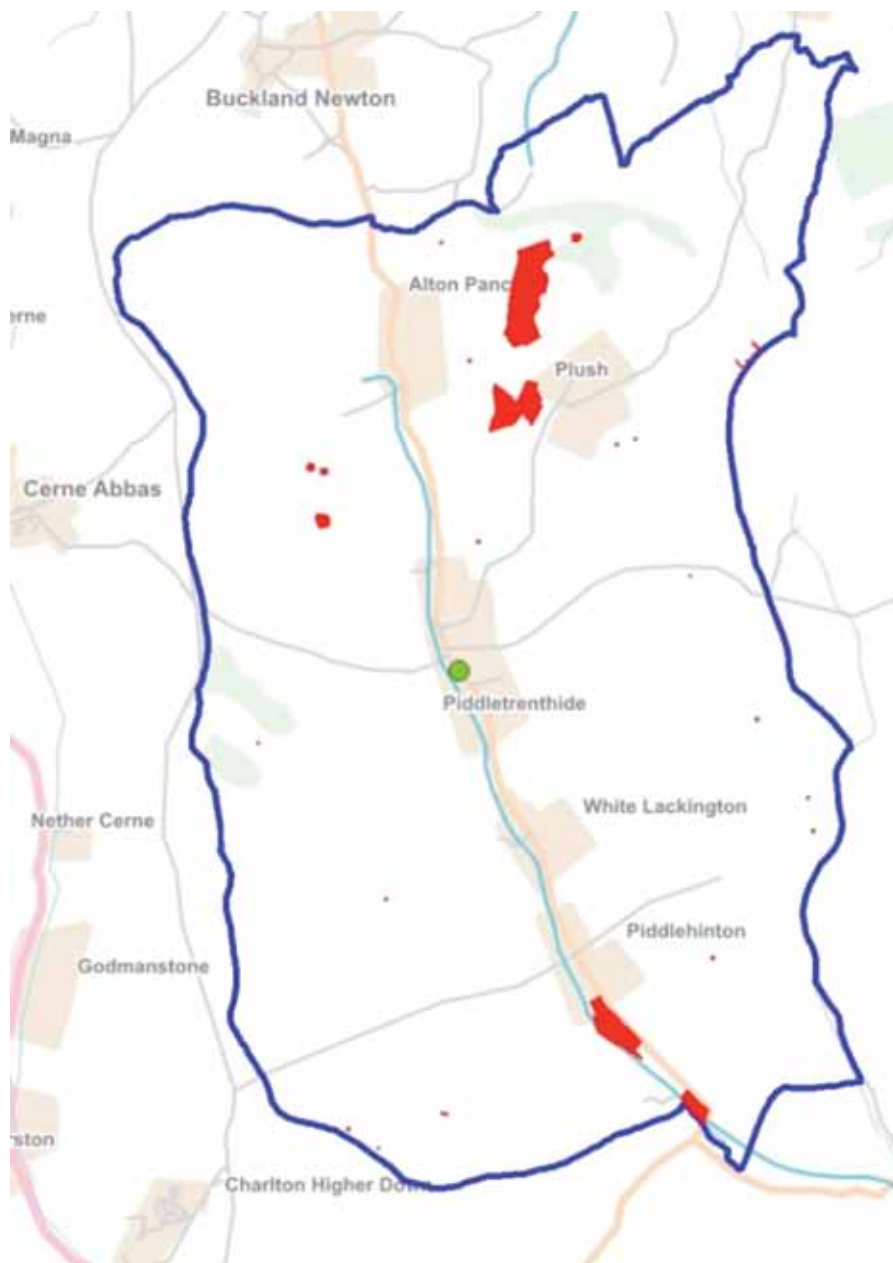
Figure 36: Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Piddle Valley Neighbourhood Plan Area

Other types of information were accessed by fewer communities, but are still considered potentially useful by over a third of teams, such as historic aerial images.

While the results show that there is greater potential for communities to access information, they also show that there is divided opinion over the formats of information considered useful, with near equal numbers of

Neighbourhood Plan teams stating that artwork, drawing & plans and film & video either could have been used or were 'not applicable'. **The results show that there are varying levels of awareness of the existence of information alongside its potential applications in plan-making.**

D3.3 Records

Results revealed low levels of use for many documentary sources typically held by Archives. Used by 41% of Neighbourhood Plan teams, 'registers and directories' are an exception, with a further 30% of communities stating that they could have used them. This also true of other documentary sources, with between a quarter to a third of communities suggesting that they could have made use of them. The results suggest that greater awareness of the availability and use of Archive information is required, potentially through guidance and training.

Overall, with the exception of some nationally and locally designated assets, access to heritage information by Neighbourhood Plan teams is inconsistent. **Communities had varying opinions about whether or not information was useful, and the reasons why they should source certain types of information are not always apparent.** Consequently teams are taking differing approaches to researching the historic environment of their areas.

The high proportions of Neighbourhood Plans considering heritage issues such as design, character, and conservation are not balanced by the proportions accessing the relevant information. As such there is clearly a gap between the information accessed and the aspirations of communities, raising the risk that plans concerning the historic environment will fall short of their mark. This is emphasised by the high numbers of communities that could have accessed information, but were unsure if it was relevant at the time.

"Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society and Leighton Buzzard and District Archaeological and Historical Society (LBDAHS) have allowed access to their records as well as donating old maps. We have also used British History Online to access information regarding Court Rolls and Manorial records. JSTOR and EBSCO have also been used to search for information regarding the parish." **Wing Parish Neighbourhood Plan**
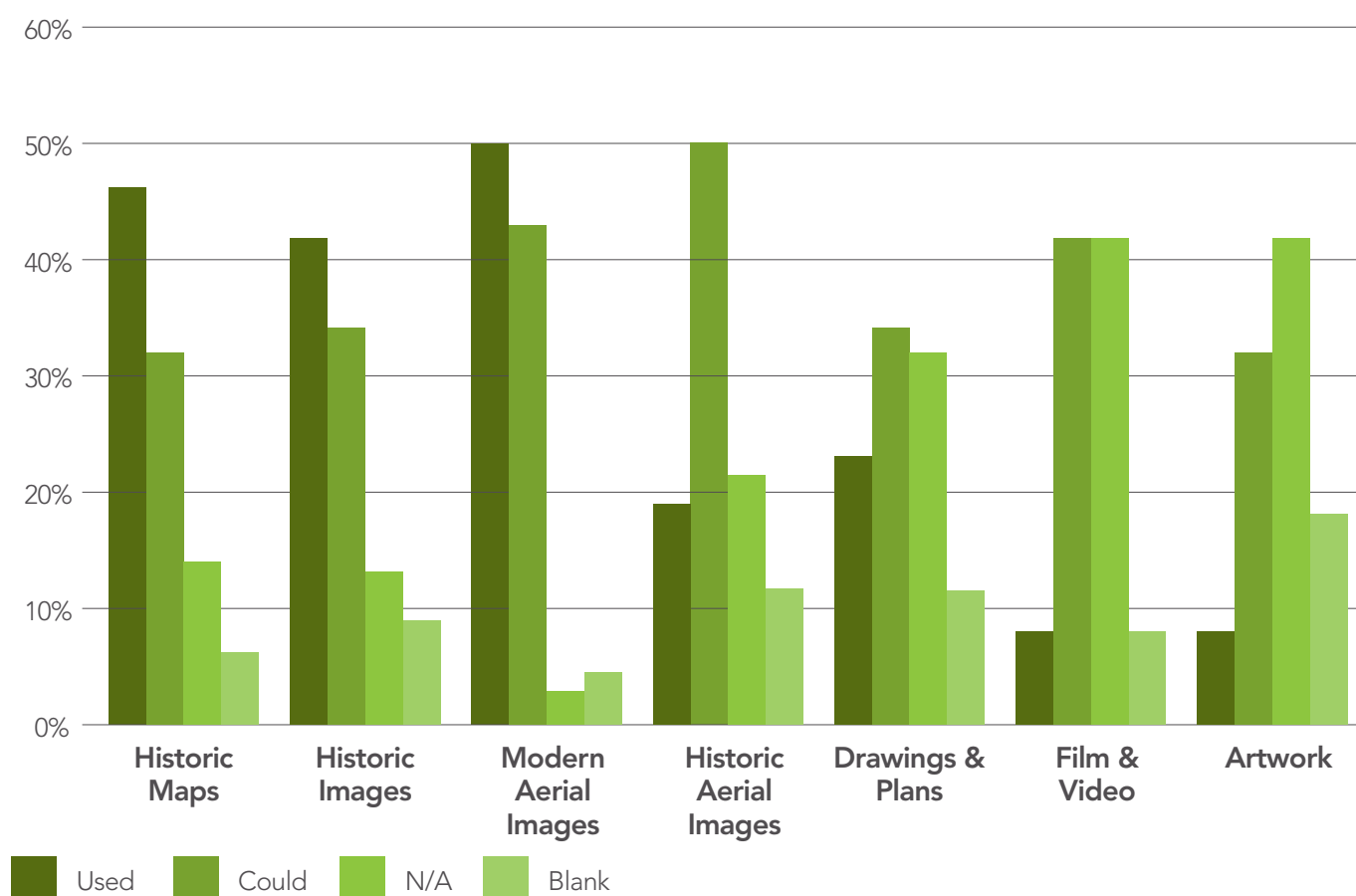
Figure 37: Percentage of Neighbourhood Plan teams indicating whether map, image and media information was used, could have been used or was not considered applicable in the plan-making process
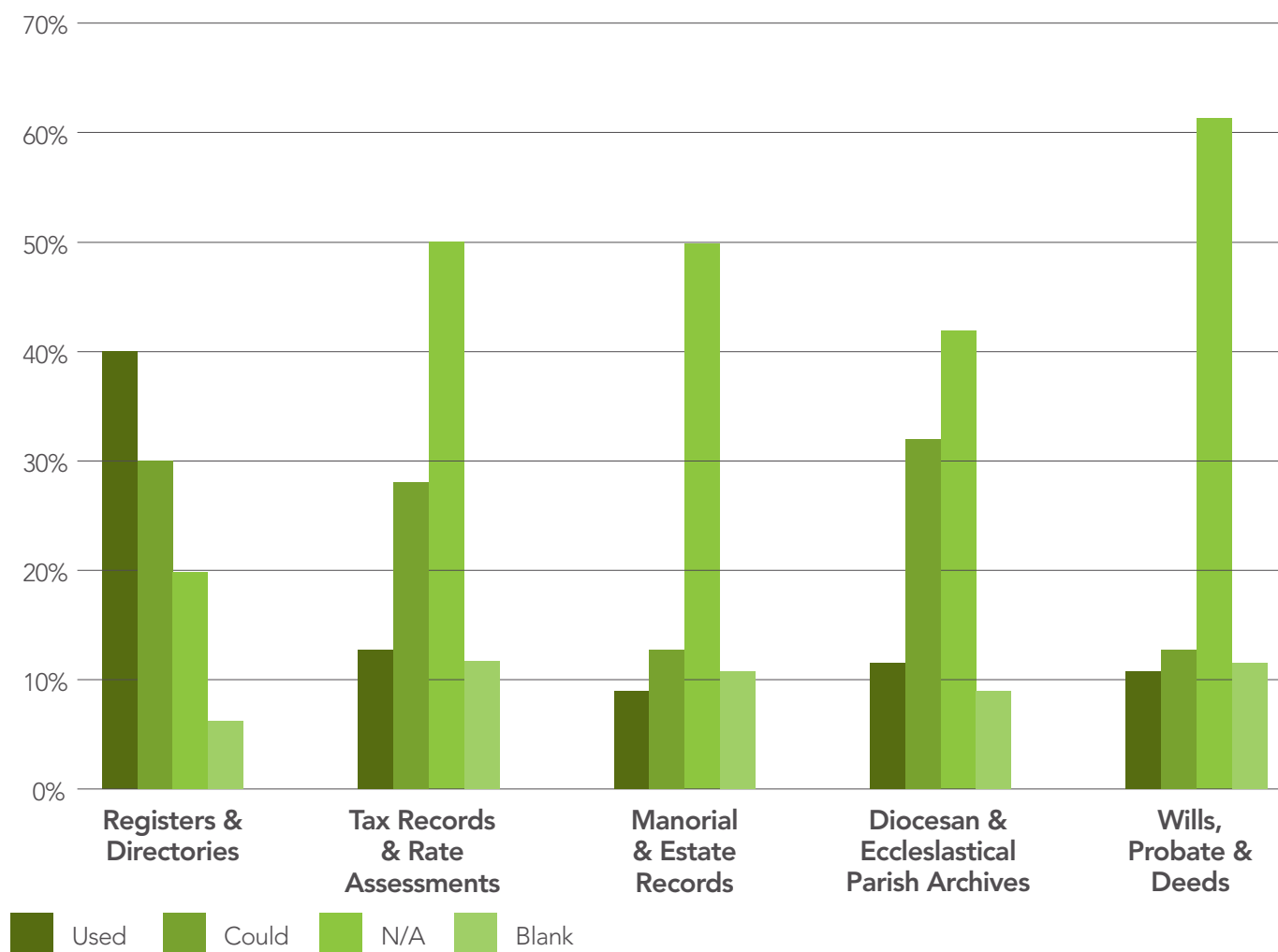
Figure 38: Percentage of Neighbourhood Plan teams indicating whether Archive records were, could have been or were not used in the plan-making process

D4. Reasons why information was not accessed

Of the reasons why information has not been accessed, over 50% of communities indicated that it is because information was not considered relevant at the time. This indicates that there is a low awareness of its potential use in Neighbourhood Planning. These results are supported by significant numbers of communities stating that, in hindsight, many types of heritage information could have

been used in the preparation of plans. Furthermore, an early survey of Neighbourhood Plan Teams showed that, when questioned about the 'environment', they suggested that they would 'come back to it later'. In general, the majority of teams are aware of the different types of information, with only 16% unaware of information and 14% unsure of where to access it.

The results demonstrate that a greater understanding of the applications of heritage information in Neighbourhood Planning is needed amongst

communities, but that the types of heritage information available and where it can be accessed also need to be promoted.

D5. Awareness of repositories

Overall the results showed that there are relatively high levels of awareness of each of the three repositories amongst plan teams, although up to 1 in 5 responses indicated that they were unaware of their local Museum, and 1 in 10 unaware of their local HER.

However, Neighbourhood Plan teams were asked to provide the name of the Museum, Archive or HER that they contacted. Scrutiny of the results shows that 21% of respondents confused 'local authority HERs' as any source of local heritage information. Taking these figures into account, only 67% of communities are aware of HERs and only 44% chose to access information from them. The alternative sources of information include local history societies or parish records, as well as the English Heritage National Heritage List and a range of other sources such as the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and 3rd parties who may or may not have accessed local authority holdings on behalf of teams.

Overall, communities are generally aware of local authority heritage resources, but on average only 45% who know about a repository are using it. The results stress the need to raise awareness of local authority repositories alongside the valuable role that local heritage information can play in the Neighbourhood Plan-making process. This is essential for preparing a plan based on a sound and proportionate evidence-base that will stand up to scrutiny at later stages of examination (see Case Study 10: Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan).

The use of other national and local resources raises the concern that Neighbourhood Plan teams are not accessing the detailed up-to-date heritage information maintained by local authorities. However, it cannot be discounted that they will provide valuable alternate resources in themselves.

"Most of the historic information and copies of key maps and books etc. is held by the Local History Society or with other specialists' and so we have tended to go these people rather than access the information directly."
Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan

D6. Ability and Experience

Neighbourhood Plan teams have a wide range of skills and experience useful for the purposes of preparing a plan. On average communities have experience in 4.6 of the 8 skills considered by the questionnaire. **Skills in 'Heritage Management' are least common, with only 36% of teams possessing such skills in-house.** Encouragingly, related disciplines/skills such as 'Research', 'Architecture and Urban Design' and 'Environmental Management' are comparatively higher, and therefore the ability to consider heritage issues is likely to be high.
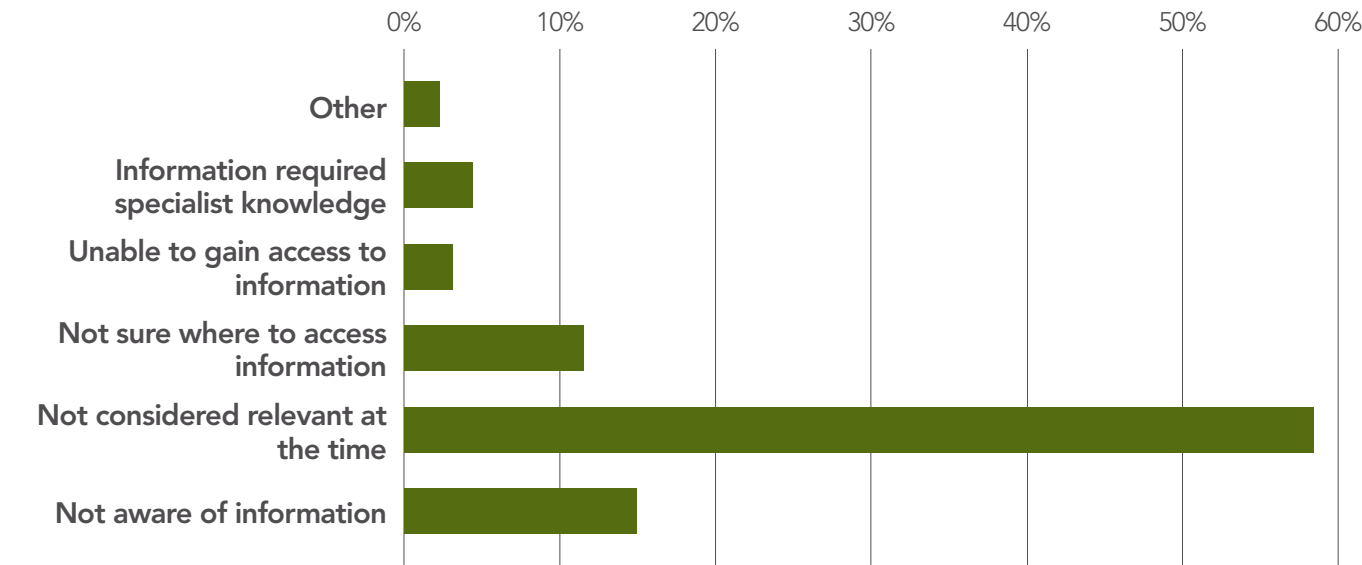
Figure 39: Reasons why heritage information available to Neighbourhood Plan teams was not accessed

Figure 40: Percentage of Neighbourhood Plans aware of and making use of Archives, HERs and Museums

Figure 41: Percentages of Neighbourhood Plan teams with experience in a range of skills relevant to Neighbourhood Planning
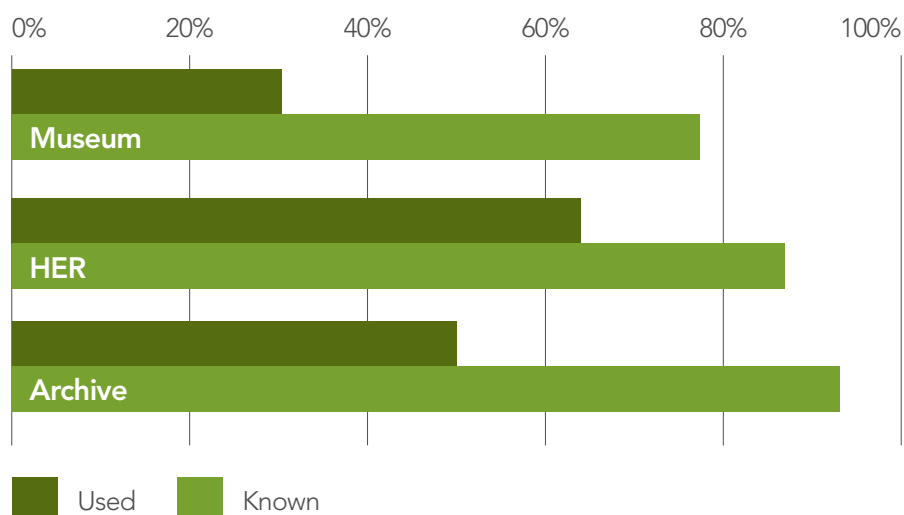
Analysis of the levels of information accessed by Neighbourhood Plan teams shows that those with in-house heritage experience consistently access higher levels of information than those without it. For several information types the difference is significant, whereas the difference is notably smaller for those information types which are arguably most known to communities such as listed buildings, conservation areas and registers and directories.

The results demonstrated the usefulness of having skills and experience in heritage management within Neighbourhood Plan teams, particularly in accessing a wider range of types of information about the historic environment. They also indicated that **an increased awareness of heritage information and heritage issues within plan teams will result in more information being accessed and used in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.** As such, the findings place emphasis on the availability of guidance and assistance that promotes awareness and use of heritage information in Neighbourhood Planning, particularly to non-expert audiences who do not have heritage skills within teams.

"We have people who are familiar with many of these records from the civic society and family and local historians. The issue is not so much access as time. We have also been lucky to have a heritage lottery grant that is helping us on a portion of history. The All Our Stories has allowed us to both commission some archaeology and look at previously unknown portions of social/ local history." **Aireborough Neighbourhood Plan**
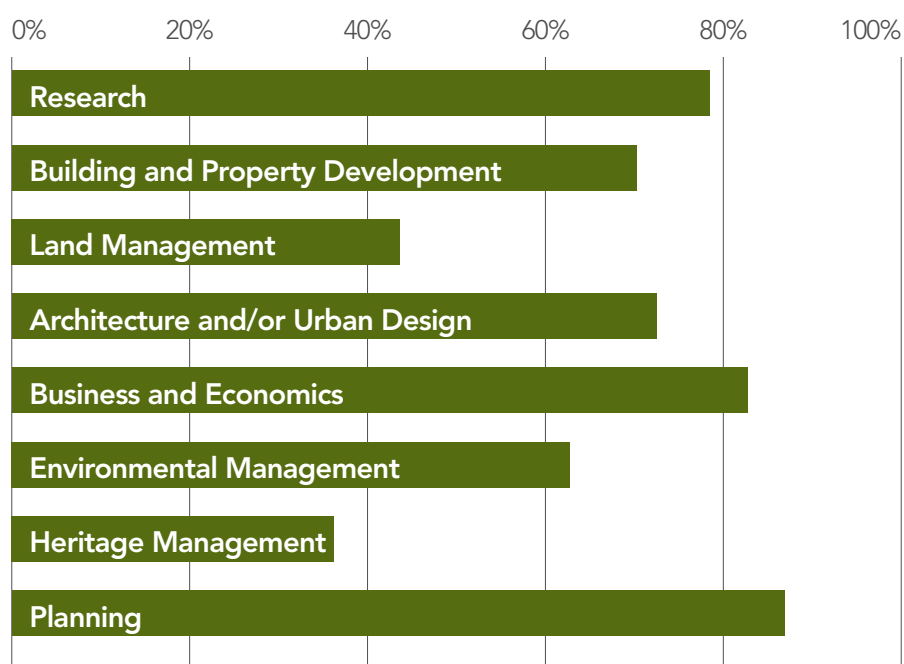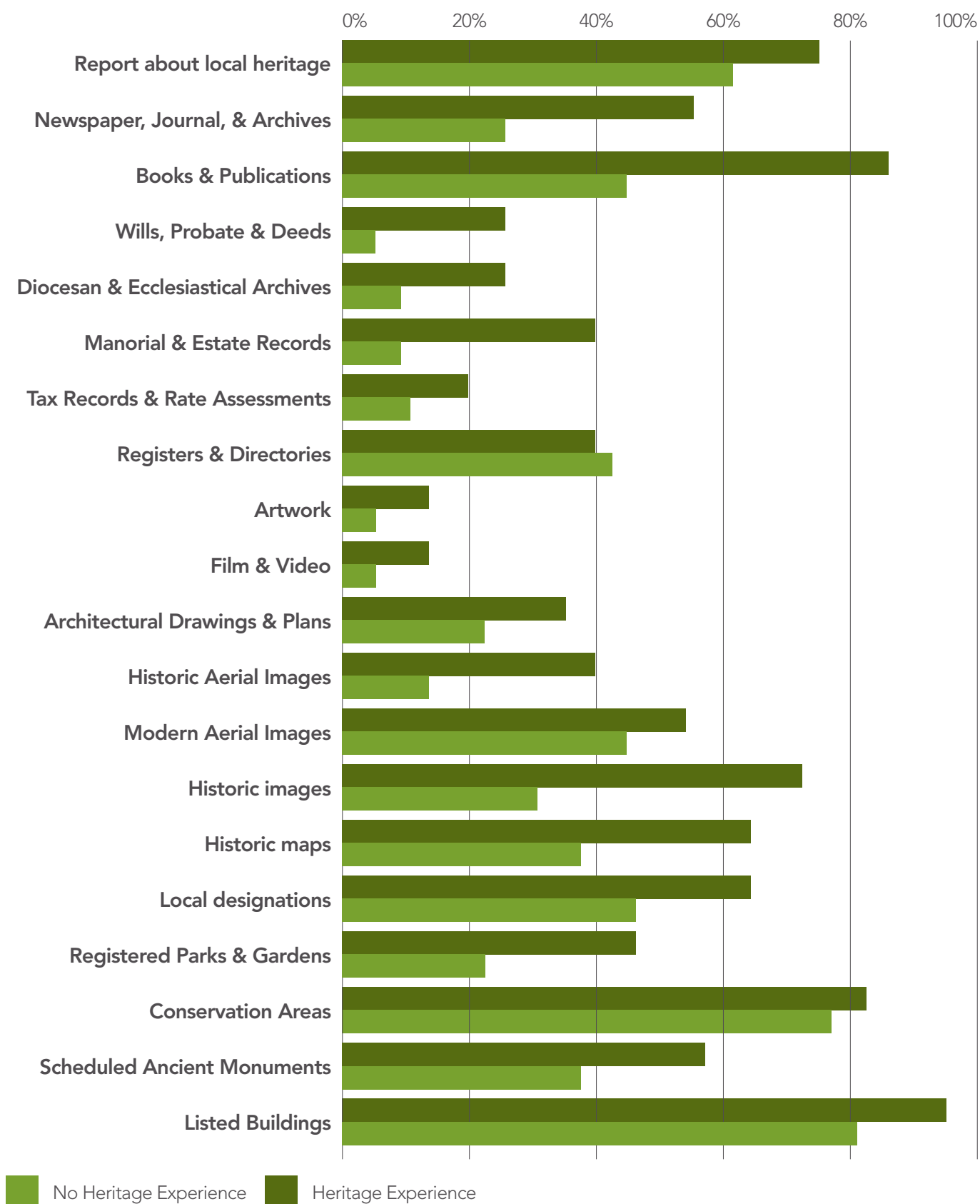
Figure 42: Types of information accessed by Neighbourhood Plan teams with and without experience in Heritage Management

Legend: No Heritage Experience · Heritage Experience

Categories (top to bottom):
- Report about local heritage
- Newspaper, Journal, & Archives
- Books & Publications
- Wills, Probate & Deeds
- Diocesan & Ecclesiastical Archives
- Manorial & Estate Records
- Tax Records & Rate Assessments
- Registers & Directories
- Artwork
- Film & Video
- Architectural Drawings & Plans
- Historic Aerial Images
- Modern Aerial Images
- Historic images
- Historic maps
- Local designations
- Registered Parks & Gardens
- Conservation Areas
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Listed Buildings

D7. Guidance and Assistance

Overall, 89% of Neighbourhood Plan teams sought assistance from their local authorities, with most indicating that district rather than county councils were contacted. 73% of teams commissioned (or intended to commission) external support either on a paid basis or through third-sector organisations. The results showed that a wide range of organisations were contacted, with Planning Aid proving the most popular, being contacted by approximately 20% of Neighbourhood Plan teams. Locality and the Design Council/ Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment were also used by relatively high levels of communities undertaking plans. Despite high uptake of assistance, including from local authorities, considerable

numbers of communities chose not to access heritage information held by Archives, HERs and Museums. Of heritage information that was not accessed, over 50% of communities stated that it was not because it was not felt relevant at the time (see Figure 39). This suggests that **greater awareness of local authority heritage resources and their applications needs to be promoted amongst providers of assistance.**

The number of communities accessing written guidance and toolkits is marginally lower than the number that received direct assistance, with 76% of respondents indicating that they had used or intended to use such guidance and 64% specifying the types of guidance used.

Figure 43 shows that by far the most common type of guidance accessed was that provided by

local authorities. The results also show that communities used a wide range of guidance produced by central government and third sector organisations, but that there appears to be a low awareness of national guidance. The application of guidance in Neighbourhood Planning is discussed, alongside a review of guidance, in the following chapter.

The low proportions of Neighbourhood Plan teams using national guidance in comparison to that offered by local authorities emphasises the role councils can have in promoting national guidance, frameworks and toolkits. The value of this promotional role, alongside the use of national guidance, is illustrated by Case Study 9. English Heritage's 'Knowing Your Place' guidance was clearly stimulated much greater consideration, and community involvement, in the historic environment.
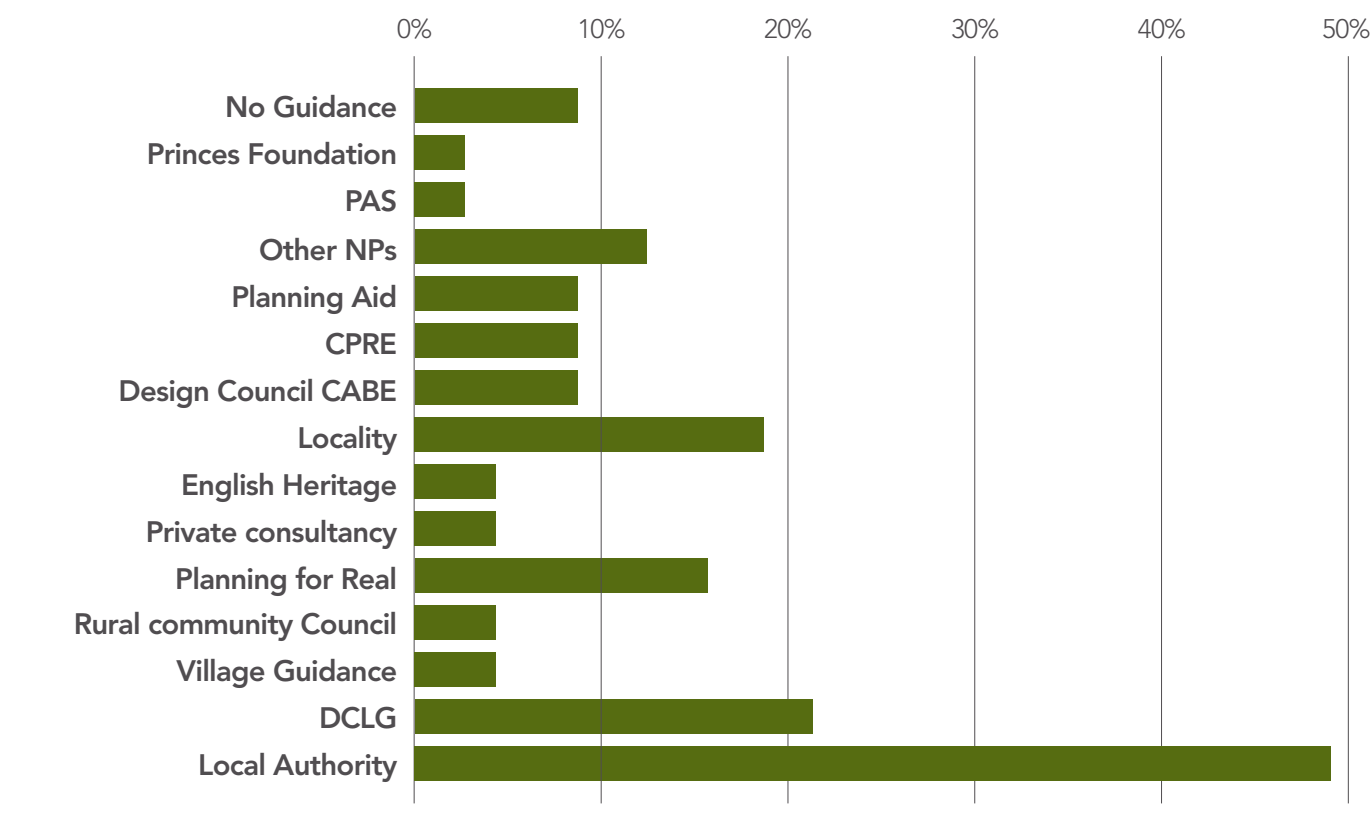

Figure 43: Sources of guidance used by Neighbourhood Plan teams

CASE STUDY 9:

Wing Neighbourhood Plan

In the preparation of their plan, the parish of Wing in Buckinghamshire used 'Knowing Your Place', an English Heritage guidance document specifically aimed at informing community-led planning. Their response to the questionnaire indicated that they used significant amounts of heritage information, which appears to be related to their use of heritage-specific guidance.
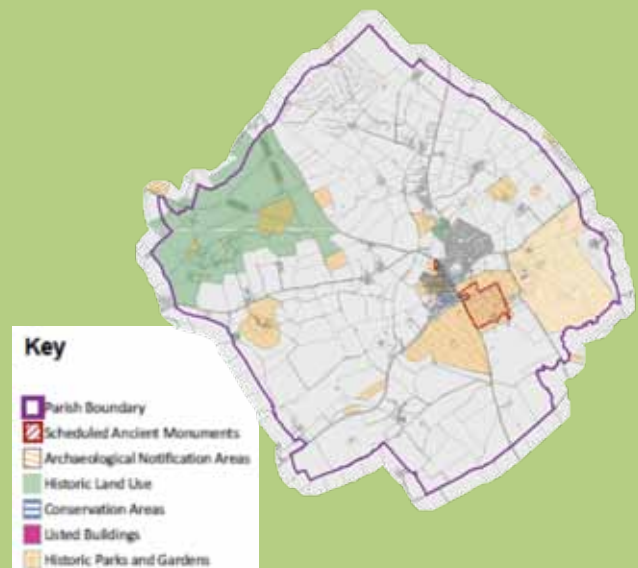

Further research into the Wing Neighbourhood Plan indicated that they have given great weight to heritage matters in their plan making process. Their website offers downloads of archaeological constraint maps (see above), press releases for significant archaeological finds, all of which are afforded equal prominence with materials about the natural environment and the economy.

Wing's Neighbourhood Plan team included a number of people with heritage skills, although in a 'non-professional' capacity. The team was directed to "Knowing Your Place" by staff at Aylesbury Vale District Council as a starting point for the consideration of heritage matters in their plan. This spurred the community to realise the value of the historic environment and to undertake a number of community-led projects, including archaeological test-pits and historic walks. In addition, the guidance led them to forge links with local archaeologists and the county museum.

It is also notable that the public consultation undertaken by Wing Parish prominently included a

section about archaeology and heritage, allowing members of the public to answer the question "How do you feel about our historical past being preserved for future generations" on a scale of "not important" to "very important".

The case study demonstrates the potential benefits of guidance that specifically engages with the process of preparing community-led plans. Furthermore, the guidance was a catalyst to a series of spin off heritage initiatives that raised, and will continue to raise, the profile of the historic environment amongst the local community. The case study also emphasises the key role that professional local authority staff have to play in promoting and supporting the use of guidance amongst community groups.

Key

- Parish Boundary
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Archaeological Notification Areas
- Historic Land Use
- Conservation Areas
- Listed Buildings
- Historic Parks and Gardens

"There wasn't much that people considered historic. The Plan has changed that. The first chapter made us recognise what we had through the checklists. The second chapter helped us realise the potential of the plan and through it I created the Heritage Project."

Sarah Roe, Vice Chair, Wing Parish Council

Chapter D: Summary Conclusions

- High proportions of plans are aware of and are tackling issues directly and indirectly related to the historic environment. This emphasises the need for communities to access a wide range of heritage information in order to take an evidence-led approach to preparing plans

- Neighbourhood Plans are not only being used to guide future new development, but as a tool to regenerate and conserve the existing historic fabric of both urban and rural areas

- There is inconsistent understanding of what information is held by Archives, HERs and Museums, as well as the contribution the historic environment can make in Neighbourhood Planning

- An awareness of the interdisciplinary uses of heritage information is required so that heritage information can effectively engage with the key topics and aspirations of Neighbourhood Plans

- Social history appears low on the agendas of Neighbourhood Plan teams, and there is a potential risk that it is being overlooked in favour of more tangible heritage information

- With the exception of archaeology, many plan teams appear to be accessing some form of relevant information according to the predominant land uses in their area

- Heritage management skills are less common than other skills within plan teams and those with heritage skills in-house accessed far more information than those without, stressing the need for assistance and guidance, especially where skills are not available in-house

- In the main communities are not accessing information because they did not consider it relevant to their plan at the time, however high proportions believe information could have been useful in hindsight

- Despite many communities being aware of Archives and HERs, on average only 45% of Neighbourhood Plan teams who know about a repository choose to access information from it. Consequently, there is high potential for communities to access much more information from Archives, HERs and Museums, particularly information that is not concerned with designated heritage assets

- Use of resources other than Archives, HERs and Museums by communities means that these repositories may miss the opportunity to raise awareness of other useful evidence-bases and the potential applications of information in the plan-making process

- High proportions of plan teams sought assistance from their local authority, with the majority contacting district councils. This emphasises the central role of local authorities have in raising awareness both about the heritage information they hold alongside national guidance available to enable its interpretation and use

- 73% of communities used external support either on a paid basis or through third sector organisations, suggesting that these organisations could be usefully engaged in promoting the use of heritage information

- Greater awareness of local authority heritage resources and their applications needs to be promoted amongst providers of assistance.

CHAPTER E: USE

Previous analysis demonstrated how the majority of communities have clear aspirations to use Neighbourhood Planning as a mechanism to guide future development, but also as a tool to regenerate and conserve the existing historic fabric of places.

The results also showed that there are low levels of heritage management experience within plan teams, and there is often a lack of awareness of the types of heritage information available and how they can be applied in Neighbourhood Planning. As such **it is likely that many plans will not unlock the full potential of heritage information without further assistance and guidance from external organisations, especially where the skills are not inherent to their plan teams.**

E1. Heritage Skills

Earlier analysis demonstrated that only around a third of Neighbourhood Plan teams have experience in heritage management. Analysis also showed how those teams tend to access greater amounts of information about the historic environment of their plan area, emphasising the value of having the skills and experience to access, interpret and apply heritage information. This is echoed by those Neighbourhood Plan teams possessing such skills in-house, with 73% indicating that they considered them useful for the purposes of preparing their plans.

In the absence of such skills, community teams will be reliant on external assistance and standing guidance, and access to both of these is considered in following Sections of this Chapter.

E2. Users of information

Responses indicated that on average Neighbourhood Plan teams typically comprise 20 people with active roles in plan-making. Some teams have significantly more or fewer participants, but the average number seems in-line with expectations, as a minimum of 21 people are required to form a Neighbourhood Forum in non-parished areas, or in parished areas the Parish Council (usually numbering between 5 and 15 people) take the lead role.

Around a quarter of communities indicated that they had a hierarchical structure to their plan teams although, as the communities were not explicitly asked about the structure of their teams, the figure may well be higher. These structures typically take the form of advisory groups, working parties and topic/task groups. Where specified, topic groups included a heritage or a heritage related subject (e.g. design, character, and architecture).

"Exeter St. James Forum set up a number of task groups to study different dimensions of the ward. One of the groups under the 'Places' theme looked at local history. The group was able to carry out its own research from records referred to below and the residents who undertook this task were people with an interest in the heritage of the area. The information they acquired was of sufficient detail to enable the plan to be prepared." **Exeter St James Neighbourhood Plan**
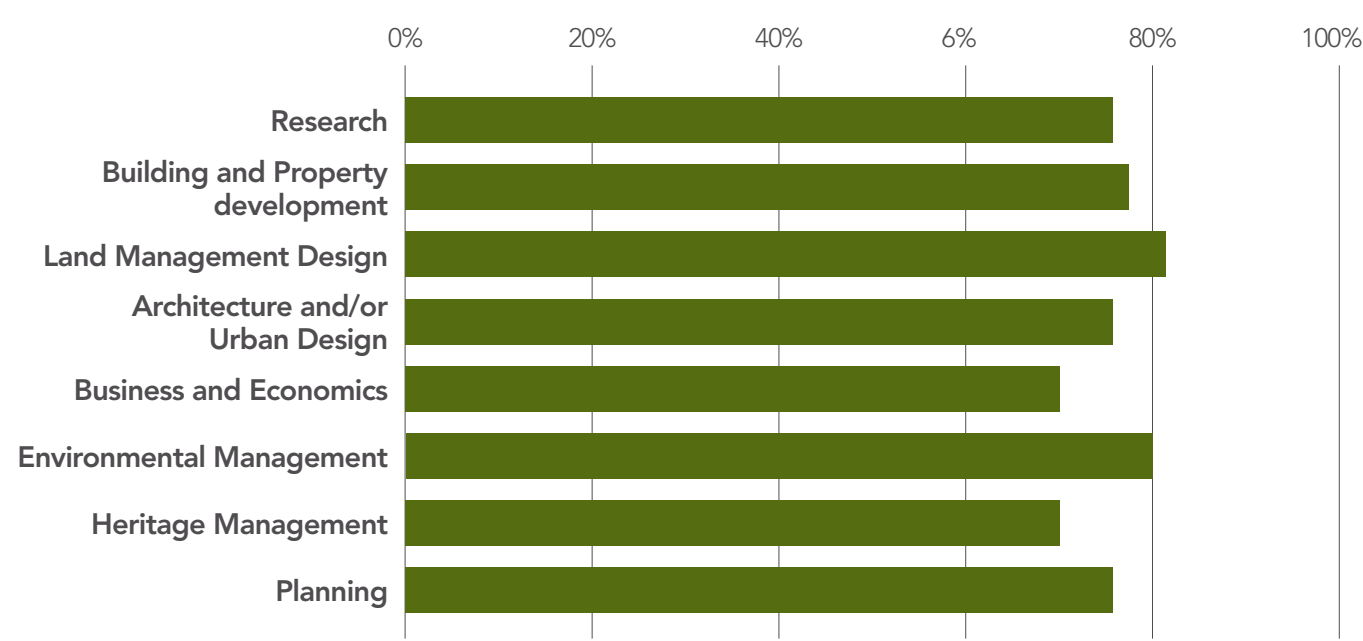

Figure 44: Percentage of Neighbourhood Plans who found in-house skills useful in preparing their plans

"We are a small, well-defined (geographically) community. Heritage data on, say, listed buildings can be obtained from the English Heritage website and information on other heritage considerations – such as archaeological sites (some quite obscure) was obtained from Oxfordshire County Council."

In responding to the questionnaire, Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan team stated that they had not accessed any published guidance on Neighbourhood Planning, and that their methodology was entirely 'self-derived'. Although the team did not include any members with experience in heritage management, their existing skills allowed them to create a framework for evaluating the impact of development on a given site in order to assess its suitability for inclusion in the plan. Heritage was one of a number of criteria on which each site was scored in order to provide an objective ranking of sites according to their likely viability.

The response provided by the plan team indicated that they accessed a number of different heritage information types, which they then employed in this way. This demonstrates that even where heritage skills are not a part of a Neighbourhood Plan team, other skillsets can be employed to interpret and integrate heritage data in an advanced manner. As well as using heritage information to define possible development sites, the draft plan contains an historic environment policy:

Policy HE1: Historic Environment

Any designated historic heritage assets in the Parish and their settings, both above and below ground and including listed buildings, and any monuments that

"When you have to make up the process then you fall back on what you know and in this instance it was derived from management techniques and skills used in the IT industry – which, given our location in the Thames Valley –were very definitely present in our Advisory Group."

Framework Criterion (Stage 1)	Method of Assessment
Is the site a green field?	Evidence of previous or existing development and whether the site is still in use
Will the local traffic impact be acceptable?	Proximity to a traffic 'hotspot' in the village and the safety, or otherwise, of pedestrian access
Is the site within the existing built up area of the village?	Assessed through criteria 16 and 17
On how many sides does the site adjoin existing housing?	Assessed by inspection of the 'enclosure ratio'
Are there natural or other obvious boundaries to the site?	Assessed by the 'bounded ratio'
Is the site particularly sensitive from a landscape (AONB) standpoint?	Landscape assessment
Framework Criterion (Stage 2)	
Is the site highly sensitive environmentally or ecologically?	The presence, or otherwise, of a recognised ecological or environmental designation
Are there tree preservation orders?	Assessed by presence absence
Is the site of archaeological interest?	Assessed using advice from OCC
Does the site contain/adjoin any heritage assets?	Assessed using advice from OCC
Is the land graded 3 a, or above?	Assessed using advice from SODC
Does the site have any infrastructure deficiencies?	OCC advice and consultation with the landowner
Is the site free from flood risk?	Department of Environment advice

may be scheduled or conservation areas that may be created will be conserved and enhanced for their historic significance and their importance to local distinctiveness and sense of place. Proposals that affect non-designated assets will be considered taking into account the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage assets.

During the pre-submission phase Oxfordshire County Council identified a lack of policy on the historic environment within the plan, eventually leading to the inclusion of the statement above. This case study demonstrates a need to undertake plans using appropriate evidence, guidance and expertise alongside the important guiding role of local authorities in the Neighbourhood Plan making process.

The structures are important in understanding how heritage information will be sourced and applied, and how its interpretation and use will need to consider and account for topics such as local economy, amenities, or transport. This places emphasis on promoting an understanding of the multiple benefits that the historic environment brings to a place, requiring those tasked with considering the heritage of their plan areas to put forward a multifaceted case for the valued contribution it makes.

"However, we have found that developers are not interested in history, and we are having difficulties with getting conservation built into their development plans. Research is one thing, but getting it into the planning system is not proving easy – even with conservation officers on our side. We are an area in danger of losing huge chunks of heritage, which is on the very verge of extinction."
Aireborough Neighbourhood Plan

A significant number of Neighbourhood Plan teams emphasised the role of local history groups in accessing and interpreting heritage information. As such, in many cases it is likely that they will have a lead role in ensuring the historic environment is considered in the process of creating a plan.

E3. Archive, HER and Museum Guidance

Local authority Archives, HERs and Museums were asked if they provided any technical guidance to help communities wishing to undertake an initiative in their local areas. Overall, few repositories appeared to provide standing guidance specifically about Neighbourhood Planning. Where available it includes community-led plan toolkits and advice on how to access funding and undertake building restoration projects. **The majority of guidance typically appears to be offered in the form of one to one consultation.**

Museums appeared to have the lowest levels of guidance about topics related to Neighbourhood Planning, followed by HERs, and then Archives, although a small number of Archives indicated that it is not their role to assist with the interpretation and use of information.

Conversely, almost half of Neighbourhood Plan teams indicated that they used some form of local authority guidance. A review of this guidance showed that it is typically generic in nature, outlining the process of

"Each visitor has a different level of both understanding of the different types of data that are available from the HER, and expertise in making use of what they might be supplied with. Those who are accessing the HER for producing some sort of Neighbourhood or Parish Plan generally require a great deal of one to one help and advice throughout the process."
Shropshire HER

preparing a Neighbourhood Plan as a whole, as opposed to tackling specific issues such as those concerning the historic environment. The generic nature of local authority guidance and the low levels of awareness of it by Archives, HERs and Museums, alongside the low levels of guidance concerning the historic environment, suggests that there may be a disconnect between local authority service areas creating Neighbourhood Planning guidance and those under which the three repositories fall. Only one of the examples given by communities (see Case Study 11) of local authority guidance includes specific mention of local historic environment resources.

The need for a more integrated approach to providing guidance on Neighbourhood Planning is illustrated by a small number of local authorities who signposted to other guidance produced by third parties, but also by many Archives, HERs and Museums indicating that they refer enquiries on to relevant colleagues within the council. A small number of repositories also indicated that they benefited from close working relationships with other local authority services, including their respective Archive, Museum, Planning, learning and/or HER team. In a small number of cases HER and Archive services are housed together, allowing for the pooling of relevant expertise.

"As regards 'interpreting information' – the role of the archive staff is to assist, but where a matter of legal or other detailed interpretation is required, we do not offer an opinion – it is for the user to source their own expert opinion rather than for us to suggest one."
Dorset Archive

Cornwall Council

Cornwall has had significant uptake of Neighbourhood Plans, with over 60 currently underway in the county. Cornwall Council has made significant efforts to support these initiatives, to the extent of recruiting a planning officer to liaise with teams on a full time basis. The council provides extensive resources online to assist in the preparation of plans, and the county's heritage services are given a high degree of prominence in the package of online guidance.

Cornwall Council also provides a searchable mapped database of HER information on Ordnance Survey base mapping using the Access to monuments website (**http://mapping.cornwall.gov.uk/ website/A2M/viewer.asp**). This enables users to identify a range of historic assets in a given area, from significant designated monuments to excavated sites. The records are hyper-linked to fuller descriptive entries on either Heritage Gateway or Cornwall's own Access to monuments database.

Cornwall HER have also prepared a number of place-based 'digests' of historic information for various areas in the form of historic environment data sheets. For selected areas, these provide an overview of historic character, heritage at risk, linked evidence bases, and proposed projects

Of the two Cornwall-based teams that responded to the community questionnaire, one stated that they had used the guidance provided by the council. This team used many different heritage information types, including all relevant national designations as well as material from the HER about archaeology, buildings and landscapes. The comprehensive approach demonstrates the combined value of accessible heritage information and guidance and how it can be applied in the plan-making process.

Stage 4: Information gathering - getting to know your neighbourhood and its context

The point of the Neighbourhood Plan is that it reflects what the community wants to see happen and it must therefore respond to local issues, opportunities, problems, needs and desires. Members of the community should be involved in gathering information, and suggesting ideas for how issues they identify could be addresses by the Plan.

This guide provides a structure to help communities gather relevant information about their area and identify issues they would like to address in the preparation of the plan. Guide notes include:

Guide Note - Collecting Information

Guide Note - Historic Environment Research Tools

Guide Note - Information available through the Historic Environment Record

Guide Note - Heritage Gateway Guide

Archives and Museums (and to a lesser degree, HERs) also indicated that they have close connections with external organisations, in particular educational institutions. Archives placed considerable emphasis on education, with several offering tailored workshops including 'guidance on how to produce village design statements, organise local history projects, or inform building restoration projects' (Gloucestershire Archive) and in developing funding bids (Knowsley Archive).

"This is done through the Brent Museum and Archives Learning Officer who provides tailored curriculum-focussed sessions for schools. This officer is in charge of a loan box service (of historical objects) open to schools and anyone engaged in education or work with young people." **Brent Museum and Archive Service**

Notably, 29% of Archives who responded indicated that they had, or had access to, a full or part time member of staff dedicated to learning and outreach, although a charge is usually made for their services.

Many responses indicated that assistance and guidance is generally provided in the form of detailed search reports and evidence, as opposed to information designed to facilitate members of the public with their own enquiries or projects. HERs and Archives frequently provide more detailed studies on certain topics or areas, which appear orientated towards the specialist or commercial enquiries. This is particularly true of archaeological guidance, which is by far the most popular topic of guidance offered by HERs. Information includes staff liaison and bespoke guidance, standing guidance/handbooks about conserving, recording and protecting archaeological monuments, templates and guidance for written schemes of investigation. Much lower levels of guidance are available for topics such as architecture, design and landscape character. Again these appear to be aimed at the professional audiences.

Overall, the results showed that few Archives, HERs or Museums are able to provide specific standing technical guidance to communities wishing to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan or similar community-led initiative. Of that which exists, guidance tends to be aimed at the specialist or professional enquiry, which may discourage those researchers less familiar with heritage resources and their potential applications in Neighbourhood Planning. Instead emphasis is placed on providing direct staff assistance, or networking with other local authority services that can provide more specific and tailored advice.

E4. External support sourced by Neighbourhood Plan teams

Overall, 86% of communities sought assistance from their local authorities, with 72% of these contacting district level authorities, 21% unitary authorities, and 6% county councils. This may influence the access and use of heritage information, as Archives, HERs and Museums are often, if not typically, administered by county councils in two-tier authorities.

Furthermore, a total of 73% of the communities who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they have commissioned (or intended to commission) external support either on a paid basis or through charitable involvement. The results show that a wide range of third sector organisations were contacted, but that Planning Aid is the most popular of these, being contacted by approximately 20% of Neighbourhood Plan teams. Locality and the Design Council/CABE were also used by relatively high levels of Neighbourhood Plan teams. 60% of communities typically employed the services of a private consultancy, none of which appear to specialise in heritage, but instead consisted of architects, urban designers and planning consultancies.

"We received considerable help from the West Yorkshire Archaeological Advisory Service in respect to research assistance as well as help from local landowners and other bodies that have been associated with aspects of village life and events. Some documents such as old deeds dating back to the fifteenth century were difficult to read and also understand; in such cases the experts from WYAAS were very helpful. Most of the team members of the sub-group also fulfilled the role of site assessor/researcher and worked to a formulaic format that guided each person to conduct their work within a given methodology. The Burra Charter was used to provide a range of definitions and assess significance of sites to the village community including inter alia, but not exclusively, cultural and historic associations." **Scarcroft Village Development Working Group**
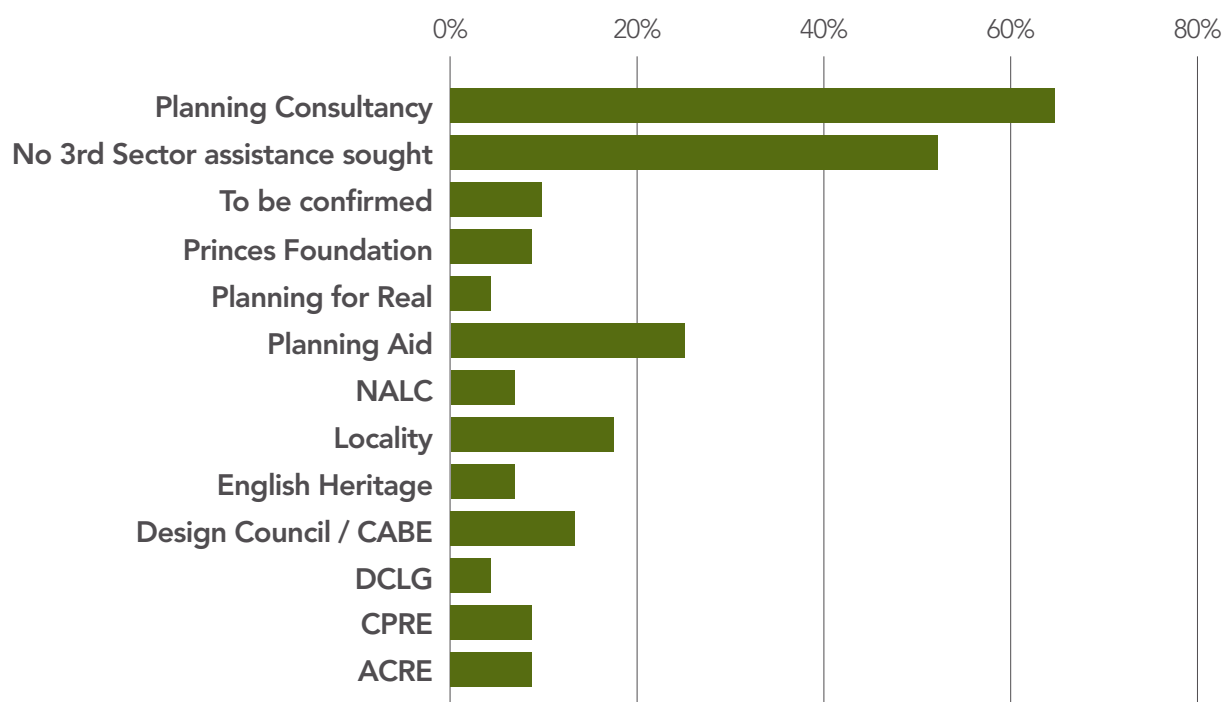
Figure 45: Providers of assistance to Neighbourhood Plan teams

"Too many, too conflicting, too complex and too confusing documents to possibly comment on this" (In reference to techniques/guidance/frameworks used).
Bow Brickhill Neighbourhood Plan

The results are likely to reflect partly the four organisations which received government funding as part of the Neighbourhood Plan Front Runner Scheme (Locality, Prince's Foundation, CPRE and the RTPI). Although issues of planning, architecture, design, and local distinctiveness are intrinsically tied to the historic environment, very few Neighbourhood Plan teams are seeking advice from organisations with a primary focus on heritage. The results also suggest that **there is a need to raise awareness of heritage information and its applications amongst third and private sector organisations**. Overall, the results emphasise the need to promote understanding of the interdisciplinary role that heritage can play in local planning amongst all participants.

E5. Technique/ Guidance/ Frameworks used by Neighbourhood Plan teams

76% of Neighbourhood Plan teams have used (or intended to use) some form of standing guidance in producing their plans. The guidance falls into two clear categories; information and support provided by local authorities and broad guidance published by national bodies (e.g. government agencies or third-sector organisations). Several communities used a mixture of both types of guidance, although that guidance from local authorities appears to be most commonly used.

Responses demonstrated that a wide range of guidance, toolkits and frameworks were used by communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans. Few responses named specific frameworks or toolkits, choosing to focus on the sources of information instead. Crucially, the types of guidance accessed and the organisations from which it is sourced are likely to support the use of heritage information in evidence-led approaches to planning. However, it is noteworthy that only two plans used heritage specific guidance, including that available from English Heritage (see Case Study 9: Wing Neighbourhood Plan). Review of local authority guidance, alongside that produced by DCLG, showed it to be generic in nature, outlining overall approaches to undertaking Neighbourhood Plans. **This points to the need for English Heritage and other bodies to make guidance, frameworks and toolkits more accessible to community groups.**

As with the types of assistance sought by communities, guidance

accessed is rarely heritage specific. Despite the fact that communities want to use plans to engage with heritage issues in their areas, there appears to be lack of awareness of the guidance and information available. The diversity of landscape types in plan areas, the wide-ranging aspirations of communities, and the plethora of information about the historic environment available, demands guidance that promotes the full interdisciplinary potential of its use in Neighbourhood Planning. It is clear that the existing structures, resources, and guidance already used by communities may have an important role to play in achieving this.

E6. Local Guidance

More Neighbourhood Plan teams claimed to have used guidance provided by local authorities and other local bodies than any other single resource. The following Section provides a brief review of the guidance

accessed by Neighbourhood Plan teams responding to the questionnaire.

In general, many local authorities offer advice on the statutory and planning background to Neighbourhood Planning, the processes required in their preparation, and the requirements that must be fulfilled to have them approved and adopted. In most cases guidance takes a step-by-step or checklist approach, enabling communities to follow a clearly mapped path throughout the plan-making process. Advice provided does not usually extend to recommending specific evidence bases for inclusion or consultation. Where such recommendations are given, they are general in nature, i.e. "information about the historic environment may be of use", and typically provide no information as to how such information can be located or accessed.

In some cases, such as the advice

provided by Broadland or Stratford on Avon District Councils, guidance points to a particular toolkit or piece of advice provided at a national level. However, even in these cases no mention is made of local authority resources held at HERs, Archives or Museums, meaning that simple opportunities to promote relevant and useful information may be lost.

The clearest and only example of

"One tool that could help is something called 'Placecheck', that has been developed by Urban Design Skills…"
Broadlands District Council

signposting to local heritage resources in local authority guidance cited by Neighbourhood Plan teams is provided by Cornwall Council (see Case Study 11), which maintains a toolkit and guidance section on its website that is aimed at providing
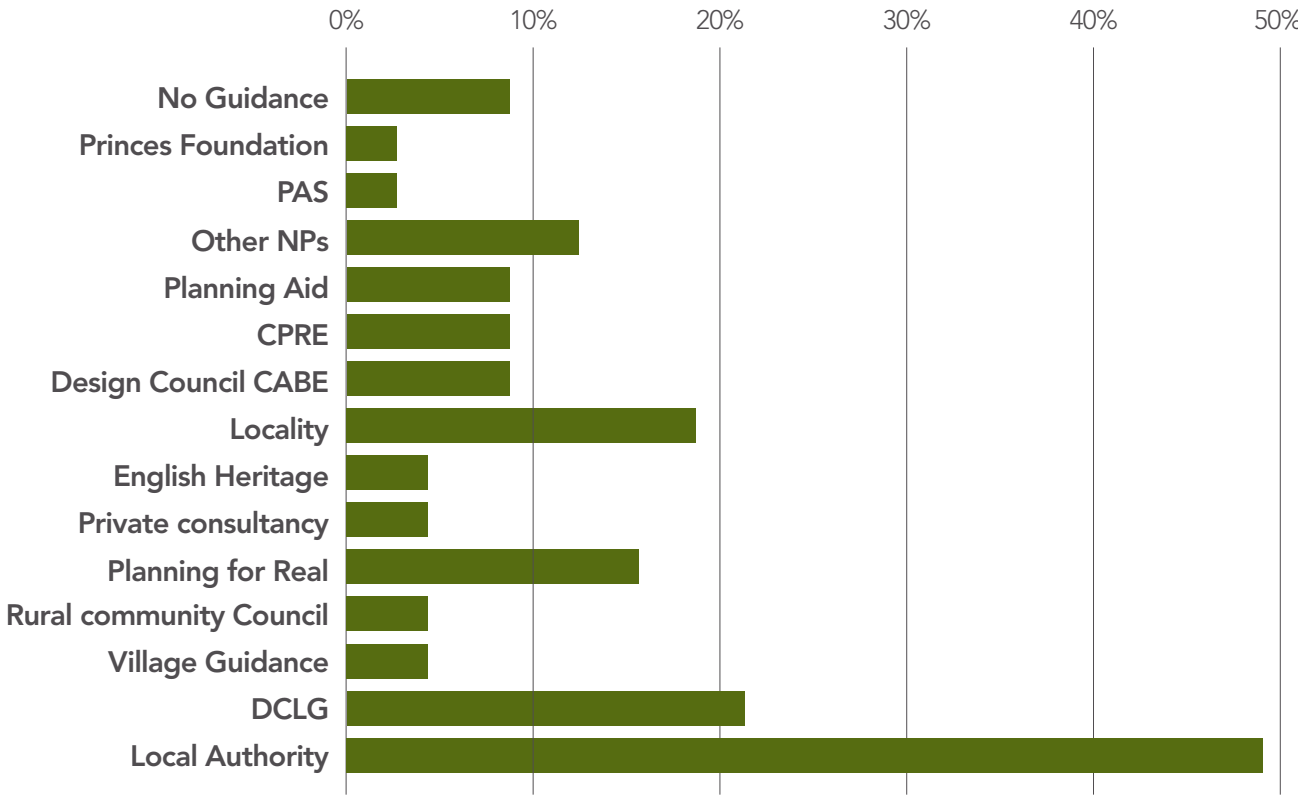

Figure 46: Types of guidance accessed by Neighbourhood Plan teams

information to communities preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Within its stage-by-stage guide to the production of a plan, the site gives particular prominence to the historic environment in the "Gathering Information" stage. This is achieved by linking to a comprehensive guide to relevant "Historic Environment Research Tools", which encompasses local sources, such as county HER services, Archives, and records, as well as a list of national resources such as English Heritage's national list and the MAGIC website.

In conclusion, **of the guidance used by plan teams that was provided by local authorities and local organisations, it is notable that relatively few examples indicate where heritage information can be found and how to incorporate it into a plan**. Guidance more typically focuses on the technical aspects of plan-making and the legal and planning requirements of producing a Neighbourhood Plan.

E7. National Guidance

Many Neighbourhood Plan teams stated that they have used guidance provided by national organisations such as Planning Aid and Locality. Although no one set of guidance was used by more than 7 plan teams, the uptake of national guidance has broad representation, with 8 different organisations providing guidance that has been used in the preparation of 26 of the 56 plans. In many cases national guidance was used in addition to that provided by local bodies.

There is a range of guidance available that details the background and rationale to Neighbourhood Planning, going on to offer a guide to the process of preparing a plan, from designating an area, through consultation and drafting, to final adoption. Guidance of this type is provided by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), Locality, the Planning

"We recommend identifying whether there are any architectural, landscape or other features that give a place a distinctive sense of character as a starting point for design." **CABE Buildings for Life**

Advisory Service (PAS) and Planning Aid. These packages are intended to guide communities in the production of a plan and generally do not appear to be concerned with specific recommendations about content or sources of information. The historic environment is occasionally mentioned as a potential topic of interest, as in the CPRE's document "How to Shape Where You Live", which provides broad advice about the historic environment including the suggestion that *"protection of important buildings and historic assets such as archaeological remains"* might be a typical aim of Neighbourhood Plans. The clearest advice on the historic environment is provided by Locality's "Neighbourhood Plan Roadmap Guide", which promotes a pragmatic approach to the understanding of heritage assets by reconciling their significance with the need to *"adapt to changing demands and to support regeneration"*. The document also specifically suggests contacting local authority Archive offices, but makes no mention of Museums or HERs.

As well as using procedural guidance of the type described above, communities also stated that they used a variety of toolkits in the preparation of their plans. These included CABE's Buildings for Life criteria, Placecheck, and Planning for Real. These toolkits are not specific to Neighbourhood Planning, but are intended to provide communities with ways of understanding character and sense of place of their local areas, and can be used to underpin further research and recommendations within a Neighbourhood Plan.

Both Buildings for Life and Placecheck make specific mention of the historic environment as an issue that might be considered within their respective methodologies. The Buildings for Life criteria recommends *"identifying whether there are any architectural, landscape or other features that give a place a distinctive sense of character as a starting point for design"*. Placecheck highlights *"historic buildings and archaeology"*, and *"traditions and local history, inherited character, important events, and associations with locally known or famous people"* as potential aspects for discussion and research.

Although neither toolkit provides specific directions for acquiring heritage information, it seems likely that they act as a starting point for communities to proceed with further research. While Planning for Real does not mention the historic environment specifically, its place-based methodology has clear synergies with a number of different types of heritage information, including characterisation, historic buildings, archaeology and historic documents.

English Heritage's 'Knowing Your Place' guidance, cited by one Neighbourhood Plan (see Case Study 9), provides specific advice on the application of heritage information in a community planning context. Advice is largely based on the data available from HER offices, with much less emphasis on information available at Archives or Museums. Although only one plan team claimed to have used this document, it is notable that they adopted a comparably comprehensive approach to accessing information about the historic environment of their area (see Case Study 9).

"English Heritage wants to encourage community groups to consider their local heritage and the historic environment's role in Neighbourhood Planning. Information on their website can also be downloaded…" **Stratford On Avon District Council**

CASE STUDY 12:

Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan, Cheshire

Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan is an advanced 'front-runner' plan that recently submitted draft proposals for a local referendum, which was carried by a 92% majority of a 53% turnout. The plan is notable for its inclusion of information gathered from a number of heritage sources, including the Cheshire County Historic Landscape Characterisation project, the Tattenhall Conservation Area Appraisal, and other information provided by the Unitary Authority.

"Areas bordering the north, north-west and north-east of the village are classified as 'Ancient Field Systems' or 'Medieval Townfields' by the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation. These areas contribute to local distinctiveness and the retention of their character is a key element in achieving sustainable development."

The Tattenhall Conservation Area Appraisal was initially conducted under the former Cheshire County Council, and was reviewed when the new unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester was established in 2007. It was subsequently updated with assistance from the local Conservation Officer, and was ratified in June 2013. The Conservation Area Appraisal provides a detailed background of information about character, locally important views and buildings, and materials and design, all of which have been used to inform policies in the plan.

Tattenhall has also drawn heavily on the Buildings for Life criteria developed by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, and has used it to develop policies requiring thorough appreciation of the existing character of the area in any new development. The case study emphasises the strengths of using an established framework in conjunction with a heritage evidence-base in order to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan concerned with the development and enhancement of local distinctiveness and place-shaping.

"The Neighbourhood Plan requires developers to use Building for Life 12 and to demonstrate the quality of their schemes, through full and thorough assessment."

In conclusion, national guidance and toolkits promote the historic environment in various and often multidisciplinary ways. There are occasional examples of specific guidance towards the topic of heritage, but very little information as to how to acquire information, interpret it, and incorporate it into a community-led plan. In particular there is very little specific mention of the local authority repositories that maintain heritage information, and consequently it cannot be assumed that communities using these guidance packages will be directed to appropriate resources. Guidance that is available is clearly not nearly as well used as would be hoped.

Chapter E: Summary Conclusions

- Communities have clear aspirations to use Neighbourhood Planning as a mechanism to guide future development, but also as a tool to encourage regeneration and conservation of the historic fabric of places

- There are low levels of heritage management experience within plan teams and poor understanding of how information is relevant to the preparation of plans. As such assistance and guidance is needed to unlock the full potential of heritage information

- Of those Neighbourhood Plan teams with experience in heritage management 73% considered it useful in preparing their plans, defining a need for expertise and assistance for plan-making

- Many plan teams use local history societies and/or topic groups to consider heritage issues, emphasising their role in the preparation of plans and highlighting them as useful and potentially receptive avenues through which to promote heritage issues

- Approximately half of Neighbourhood Plan teams used local authority guidance, although such guidance rarely tackles specific issues concerning the historic environment

- Few Archives, HERs and Museums have guidance to assist with Neighbourhood Plans and the historic environment. Where available, guidance encourages greater use of information and consideration of heritage issues, outlining a need to develop and promote guidance

- Guidance that does exist is often based around researching specific topics as opposed to places, and using specific types of data, often for professional purposes. Consequently it may need to be adjusted for the needs of community-led plans and associated area based research

- All Archives, HERs and Museums, but particularly Archives, stressed the value of being able to refer communities to other services or departments (e.g. planning), emphasising the need for strong lines of communication amongst related local authority services

- Repositories have varying levels of resources available to assist communities, but of all the repositories, Archives appear the best resourced and most well connected to other local authority teams and external organisations

- As the majority of teams accessing guidance and assistance did so at district level, there may be implications in terms of the access and use of heritage information, as many Museums, Archives and HERs are administered at county level

- There are clear benefits of a close working relationship between local authorities and Neighbourhood Plan Teams, especially where information, assistance and guidance can be provided in integrated ways

- A wide range of guidance, toolkits and frameworks were used by communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans, particularly from those organisations afforded central government funds.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

High proportions of communities are able to access information about the historic environment of their plan areas. However, their interest is mainly focussed on a core group of designated heritage assets, with access to other types of information commonly held by Archives, HERs and Museums highly variable. The high proportions of communities planning to consider issues concerning design, character and conservation are not matched by the proportion of communities accessing relevant and available heritage information. Such information would be useful in addressing many key issues engaged with and consequently there is a risk that, if overlooked, the historic environment will not fully contribute to the plan-making process.

Neighbourhood Plan teams are often sourcing heritage information from resources other than Archives, HERs and Museums, in particular local history society and parish records, national resources and district authorities. A major implication of communities using alternative resources is that Archives, HERs and Museums will miss out on key opportunities to promote access to information that is not commonly searched for. This also raises a number of potential issues concerning the range and quality of information being accessed, particularly where information has a statutory role in planning.

The use of other resources, including local sources, resonates with a desire amongst Neighbourhood Plan teams for heritage information to be presented in a digestible place-based report. Due to the structure and nature of their collections, HERs and, to a lesser extent, Archives are much more able to provide information about specific areas than Museums, meaning that communities are less likely to be able to access information specific to their plan areas from the latter resource. Such place-based structures appear to be increasingly used by some local authorities, especially online, but there is significant scope for wider application of such structures.

Methods of accessing information vary amongst Neighbourhood Plan teams, but there is a clear preference for web-based material, in part due to the lower costs and practicalities. Many Archives, HERs and, to a much lesser extent, Museums are able to provide direct Online access to information, and an increasing number are providing information in an integrated way. However there are a number of issues with providing information Online. Information is often divided up between multiple websites, divorcing it from key contexts that might enable its use, masking synergies between types of information and requiring the user to interrogate multiple sources. Direct Online access to information via a website also bypasses support and assistance provided by local authority officers which is much valued by Neighbourhood Plan teams.

A physical Visit remains the most effective way for people to access information, both in terms of the breadth of information available and the assistance and guidance on hand. However, the ability to visit and interrogate a repository's collections varies considerably. Archives are best equipped and resourced to receive and assist people throughout the entire week. On the other hand 1 in 10 HERs are closed to public visitation, while Museums are comparatively poorly equipped for research and often operate seasonal hours.

The physical and cognitive availability of heritage information may not be the main factor influencing its uptake in Neighbourhood Planning. Awareness of the types of heritage information available and their potential roles in the Neighbourhood Plan-making process are significant factors influencing levels of community access to heritage information. When questioned the vast majority of communities suggested that in hindsight, they could have made use of information held by Archives, HERs and Museums in preparing their plans. Neighbourhood Plan teams are frequently unclear about the potential applications of heritage data, and therefore the reasons why they should source certain types of information are not apparent to them. This is exacerbated by the low level of heritage management skills within Neighbourhood Plan teams. Where available, over 70% of communities found heritage management skills useful, and those teams with such skills in-house consistently accessed more information than those without. As such it is highly likely that many Neighbourhood Plans will not unlock the full potential of heritage information without assistance and guidance.

Neighbourhood Planning guidance at local authority level is highly varied, with some taking a proactive approach whilst others provide very little support. Review of the guidance demonstrates that the role of Archives, HERs and Museums as information providers and sources of assistance is rarely promoted. Similarly, the role of heritage in Neighbourhood Planning is seldom addressed. This is mirrored by national guidance and toolkits used by Neighbourhood Plan teams. These rarely engage with specific heritage issues directly although many do address issues related to heritage. As plans are likely to engage with the full spectrum of the historic environment of their areas there is a need for guidance about managing it at the local scale. Furthermore, the plethora of issues being addressed also means that any guidance must promote the interdisciplinary use of heritage information, as well as setting out its more direct role in the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Existing guidance from both local and national bodies presents an important resource both now and for developing future guidance.

The availability of local advice and assistance is key to the successful access and application of heritage information by communities. High proportions of Neighbourhood Plan teams sought assistance from a wide range of organisations and groups, in particular local authorities and local history groups as well as third sector organisations. The variety of stakeholders involved underlines the need to maintain and build strong relationships through which heritage information and its potential applications in Neighbourhood Planning can be promoted and achieved. In many instances local history societies are likely to have an important role. Strong communication is also essential between tiers of local government and amongst local authority services to ensure heritage information is made accessible and its use in Neighbourhood Planning encouraged.

It is clear that the historic environment has a central and multi-disciplinary role to play in Neighbourhood Planning. The majority of communities undertaking Neighbourhood Plans have clear intentions to use them as a mechanism to regenerate and conserve the historic environment. Guidance and assistance, in particular that promoted and made available by local authorities, is key to helping communities achieve their aspirations for their heritage.