

## **Cabinet**

**Date Of Meeting: 4 January 2024**

**Title of Report: Weight to be given to the Climate Emergency in Planning Decisions relating to Heritage Assets**

**Report of: Executive Director – Place**

**Cabinet Portfolio: Planning Policy and Place**

**Key Decision: No**

**Confidentiality: Non-Exempt**

### **Purpose Of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to address the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in relation to heritage assets. Recent planning appeal decisions have raised questions about the Council's position. Therefore, this report aims to clarify the Council's stance while emphasising that each application will be assessed individually based on its merits.

### **Recommendation**

2. Cabinet confirms the following:
  - there is a public benefit to energy efficiency and renewable or low carbon energy measures which, even in a small way, assist the Council's commitment to making Hart district carbon neutral by 2040,
  - that significant weight will be given to the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in all planning decisions, including those relating to heritage matters,
  - that the weight given to the conservation of the heritage asset will depend on the importance of the heritage asset and
  - where a development proposal would give rise to some harm to the significance of a heritage asset, the level of harm needs to be assessed and weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

### **Background**

3. In April 2021, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as a top priority for all policies and formal decision-making, especially in planning. The Council pledged to make Hart district carbon neutral by 2040, and this commitment is also outlined in the Council's Corporate Plan. There is, however, a need to clarify the Council's approach to planning applications, particularly those involving 'heritage assets'.
4. Heritage assets are classified into two categories: designated and non-designated. Designated assets comprise conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled monuments, and registered historic parks and gardens. Designated heritage assets of the highest significance include Grade I and II\* listed buildings and Grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens. On the other hand, non-designated assets include buildings and features that hold special historic interest but do not have any formal designation.

5. Historic England has recently consulted on an [Advice Note](#) concerning Climate Change and Historic Buildings. The consultation period ended on 24 December 2024. This is the first time that Historic England has adopted a more progressive stance on climate change mitigation, representing a crucial step towards implementing Historic England's Climate Change Strategy.
6. The draft Advice Notes provides advice on:
  - the need for planning permissions and/or other consents for some of the common changes required to decarbonise and improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings,
  - determining proposals to decarbonise and improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings to enable positive climate action and
  - how local plans and other planning mechanisms can deliver a positive strategy for historic buildings that proactively supports climate action.

### **Main Issues**

7. When considering a development proposal that could harm a heritage asset's significance, the decision maker must weigh that harm against any public benefits the proposal may provide. Such benefits can include anything contributing to social, economic, or environmental objectives.
8. Environmental objectives can be defined as safeguarding and improving our natural, built and historic environment. These objectives involve using land efficiently, enhancing biodiversity, using natural resources wisely, reducing waste and pollution, and adapting to climate change by moving towards a low-carbon economy.
9. Following the "Act Locally Impact Globally" approach, promoting energy efficiency, and adopting renewable or low-carbon energy measures can benefit the public and contribute to the Council's goal of making Hart district carbon-neutral by 2040, even if it is a small step.
10. When evaluating a proposal for modifying a heritage asset as a response to climate change, it is necessary to balance the heritage asset's value and the benefits the proposal provides to the public. The preservation of the heritage asset must be given significant importance and weight - the more significant the heritage asset, the more weight it should be given.
11. Implementing measures that can improve energy efficiency and use renewable or low-carbon energy sources is important. This benefits the owner by reducing costs and has a wider public benefit as it contributes towards making Hart district carbon neutral by 2040.

### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

12. The Cabinet must make a statement about considering climate change when assessing heritage assets to avoid confusion or uncertainty.

### **Corporate Governance Considerations**

#### **Relevance to the Corporate Plan**

The Corporate Plan's Planet section declares a climate emergency and puts the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> at the forefront of all policies and decision-making, particularly Planning. This report guides applications that may affect a heritage asset.

## **Service Plan**

- Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan? No
- Is the proposal being funded from current budgets? Yes
- Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal? Yes

## **Legal and Constitutional Issues**

13. No direct legal or constitutional issues are raised by this report.

## **Financial and Resource Implications**

14. No direct financial or resource implications are associated with this report.

## **Risk Management**

15. No direct risk matters are associated with this report.

## **Equalities**

16. No direct equalities matters are associated with this report's content.

## **Climate Change Implications**

17. Matters relating to the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency are covered in detail in this report.

## **ACTION**

18. If Cabinet endorses this report, it will provide clearer guidance to decision-makers regarding the weight that the Council would like to give to climate change in relation to heritage matters when determining applications.

**Contact Details:** Mark Jaggard, Executive Director.

## **Appendix**

None.