

# Wigan Historic Environment Strategy

Draft for Consultation September 2020 – Plain Text Version

“My role as Heritage Champion allows me the privilege of working with our communities and stakeholders to protect and conserve all aspects of our historic environment.

The consultation on this draft Historic Environment Strategy is a fantastic opportunity for us all to think about the things that make our borough special and get involved in protecting and conserving them. It is not just about fine architecture and grand buildings; it is much more than that, especially in towns like ours where we should cherish our local designs constructed of terracotta, brick and stone and the ancient street patterns that still exist, so we can, where possible, maintain the vistas and views of our town centres and distinct communities we live in that make them special to each one of us. Indeed our shared history is told through the historic environment, it has shaped our personal experiences and it will continue to shape our future.

This strategy celebrates the borough’s historic environment and recognises the considerable economic, social and environmental benefits it generates. However, it also acknowledges the challenges we face, not least securing investment and finding new financially viable uses for buildings. We must work together across all sectors to find creative and meaningful solutions – not seek to preserve the world as it was 100 years ago - but encourage sensitive adaptation and advocate pragmatic conservation.

We intend this strategy to raise awareness of our fantastic historic environment, promote good management and inform our priorities for action. As the strategy says, our heritage belongs to the people of the borough and we all have a responsibility to protect it and a right to enjoy it”, so please do let us know your views on this draft strategy and help us make the borough the best possible place it can be.

*(signature)*

Councillor Halliwell

Wigan Council, Heritage Champion”

# Wigan Borough Historic Environment Strategy

## 1 . Your place, your heritage, your strategy

Wigan's heritage belongs to the people of the borough and we all have a responsibility to protect it and a right to enjoy it. The historic environment is part of that heritage. By historic environment, we mean historic buildings, structures and ruins, conservation areas and historic gardens and landscapes. Collectively these are known as heritage assets. The Council owns a number of heritage assets, but most are owned and managed privately, by people and businesses, or by local community groups and voluntary bodies. This strategy sets out a framework that can be used by all those groups to work in co-operation with local communities and the council to help conserve and enhance the borough's historic environment.

To meet this aim it is vital that the resources available are used in an efficient and effective manner and that clear priorities are established. To achieve that a collective approach has to be taken, recognising that businesses, community groups and voluntary bodies can often access funding that the council cannot.

By being a pragmatic advocate for conservation - protecting and enhancing our historic environment through collaborative working, being flexible and taking advantage of opportunities - we will be able to capitalise on the heritage that makes our area distinctive and, in doing so, make it a more attractive place to live, work, visit and invest.

This Wigan Historic Environment Strategy sets out the Council's vision and priorities for the protection of the borough's historic environment, together with a robust framework to enable and support the delivery of projects that affect our historic environment.

## What does the strategy cover?

This strategy covers planning, development, regeneration and management issues affecting the borough's historic environment. This strategy does not cover wider aspects of heritage, including museums, galleries, archives, local collections and events. However, it does recognise the important role that these broader heritage interests play in promoting a strong historic identity and engagement in the historic environment.

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### ***Definition: Historic Environment***

*All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.*

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### ***Definition: Heritage Asset***

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

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## CASE STUDY: The Old Courts

The Old Courts are a not-for-profit arts centre who promote the best in arts and culture in Wigan Borough. They have been actively involved in the restoration of historic buildings The Old Courts, Wigan Pier and, upcoming, the Royal Court Theatre.

Rebecca and Jonathan Davenport

We aren't taking control of these buildings for a vanity project. We're looking at buildings so that we can maximise their use for the people of the borough and beyond. There is a misconception that old buildings are just to be abandoned and just part of people's memories and anecdotes when actually they have great history, character are solidly built - but full of character. The character is part of our unique selling point – we like showing off their character and showing off Wigan when it was part of a world powerhouse, we want that again.

There is so much talent, humour, culture and energy in Wigan. We're restoring The Royal Court – we're not creating a new theatre – the building is already a theatre. We're taking it back.

## 2. Why is the historic environment important?

The historic environment is all around us. In fact, it is so interwoven into the fabric of our everyday lives that sometimes we only really notice it when the values it has are at risk of being lost. Historic buildings, spaces and monuments influence how our towns, villages and landscapes look and feel. In doing so they help create a sense of identity that is shared by those living in the area, fostering a sense of belonging, pride and creating stronger communities.

Many studies have been undertaken to try and quantify the benefits of the historic environment. The 2019 Historic England report 'Heritage Counts' placed the value of Heritage to the UK economy at £35 billion gross value added, employing nearly half a million people. This value comes from the ways in which the historic environment can facilitate economic development, through regeneration, tourism, leisure and recreation, cultural and community development, skills, training and education and most importantly - creating a sense of place.

Due to the distinctive and unique nature of heritage assets, the historic environment is an especially important component of regeneration and place making. Research has shown that locations with a strong sense of place are more likely to be prosperous than those without. Places with well maintained older buildings are perceived as more attractive and of higher quality. This in turn will attract investment and, most importantly, people.

In helping to form places that people want to live in, work in and spend their leisure time in, well-maintained historic environments and buildings can also stimulate cultural activity and gains for health and well-being.

Our towns and villages each have their own character, unique qualities and their own heritage assets. This strategy recognises that each area comes with its own identity which is fundamental to its sense of place. As such there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach to conservation and that what works in one area may not necessarily work in another.

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**Definition: Historic England**

*Is a non-departmental governmental body. It is tasked with protecting the historic environment of England by preserving and listing historic buildings and ancient monuments and by advising central and local government. It is officially called 'The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England'.*

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“People told us they are proud of our history and where our borough has come from. Along with protecting our heritage, so everyone has the chance to explore it, we now want to build on it and look to the future.”

Source: The Deal 2030, Wigan Council

### 3. The challenge and aim

The historic environment presents many opportunities to improve the borough, however it is also clear that there are many complex challenges to ensuring our historic assets are well maintained and in active use.

A key challenge is that low land values throughout much of the north, especially former industrial areas and mining towns, have an impact on the historic environment in terms of the ability to attract investment, fund schemes and make developments viable. In order to overcome this it is essential to find suitable, financially viable uses for heritage assets and to encourage proactive engagement from owners and stakeholders.

In some instances, owners of heritage assets may not be able or willing to invest in their buildings – this can lead to the deterioration of historic fabric and a cycle of decline which can have a negative impact on a wider area and become increasingly difficult to address. Whilst local authorities have some tools and powers available to intervene, these are limited in scope and can be resource intensive. There is a challenge in enabling and encouraging owners to be proactive in the management of historic sites to prevent them falling into an unviable state. It is better to act sooner than later as delayed action can often lead to more extensive and more expensive solutions in the long term.

This highlights a related challenge to improve awareness and understanding of the special qualities and value that our heritage assets hold amongst building owners and occupiers.

There are many groups who are passionate and active in the support of Wigan's historic environment. It is recognised that better information, active engagement, and more appropriate support are important factors in helping face the challenges we have.

For these issues to be addressed it is essential to understand what heritage assets we have in the borough and what values they have. Only then can we be a pragmatic advocate for conservation by exploring how we can best support the values of these assets and creating an action plan to better manage our historic environment.

## The Aim

The overall aim of the strategy is:

“To value Wigan’s historic environment, ensure it can be fully enjoyed and contributes to the economy and quality of life for present and future generations.”

## CASE STUDY: LANCASHIRE MINING MUSEUM

The Lancashire Mining Museum at Astley Green is a former colliery site and the home of the last surviving headgear in the Lancashire coalfield. It is an important living monument to Wigan's mining heritage.

Cliff Graham – Volunteer Engineer

I've been volunteering here for 25 years – since 1995. I worked at the pit as an engineer and my passion is just keeping it going.

My family has a history of working in mines, my dad and brother were in the mines so there are many family memories.

There are also many families that lost members in the pits – disasters and such – they have to be remembered. I think it's important that children know what it's all about, they love to see the machinery and families really enjoy it. It's part of their heritage.

## 4. Themes and principles

This strategy is framed by three themes under which a series of principles are identified.

### 1. Understanding our historic environment

- We will identify the heritage assets we have in Wigan Borough and their significance.
- We will broaden our understanding of the borough's historic environment.
- We will raise awareness of heritage legislation and policies.
- We will raise awareness of the roles and responsibilities that exist for the historic environment and for owners of heritage assets.
- We will explore the stories of the different places across the borough and engender understanding of how those heritage assets and their history contribute to significance

### 2. Valuing our historic environment

- We will identify the values of our heritage assets.
- We will capitalise on our under-utilised heritage assets and the potential they have to support redevelopment, regeneration and sense of place.

- We will secure a wide appreciation of the value of built heritage within the council, partner organisations, owners of heritage assets and local communities within the borough.
- We will promote and celebrate the value of the historic environment.

### 3. Managing and protecting our historic environment

- We will identify those heritage assets 'at risk' and prioritise them for positive intervention.
- We will establish a proactive and positive approach to management of the borough's heritage assets including early intervention and use of statutory powers where necessary.
- We will identify opportunities to develop heritage assets and enhance and promote their values.
- We will work with others to endeavour to be an exemplar in the management of the councils heritage assets.
- We will work with public and private stakeholders to encourage, advise and support positive management of heritage assets.
- We will establish a positive action plan and, through that, strengthen our legacy for the future.

From these themes and principles, the following objectives have been established. The action plan sets out targeted actions under each of these objectives.

- To reduce our heritage at risk
- To work effectively with the owners of heritage assets
- To work in partnership with communities and other stakeholders to conserve the historic environment.
- To ensure our historic environment strategy action plan is delivered
- To have a relevant and up-to-date policy framework for historic environment conservation
- To celebrate, and promote learning and understanding about our historic environment
- To ensure we work with others to endeavour to be an exemplar in the management of the councils' historic assets
- To promote good practice in historic environment conservation
- To identify new funding opportunities
- To be proactive in addressing development that harms our historic environment
- To protect and enhance our Conservation Areas

## 5. The law and policies behind our strategy

Protecting the historic environment is enshrined in national law and planning policy:

The historic environment is protected in law by four different Acts of Parliament, the main two are The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

It also advocates that planning authorities should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment including heritage assets at risk.

Locally, this Historic Environment Strategy is underpinned by the Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy and saved UDP Policies. Core Strategy policy CP11 sets out a requirement to conserve and enhance our historic environment, thereby helping to make the borough a better place to live.

There is also a series of supplementary planning documents that are material considerations in determining planning applications concerning the historic environment, notably the Canalside Development and Improvement SPD.

This strategy also aligns with other council strategies and plans, including:

- The Deal 2030

- Wigan Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework
- Leigh Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework (in preparation)
- The Fire Within Cultural Manifesto
- The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (in preparation)
- A series of Conservation Area Appraisals and Conservation Area Management Plans

Wigan Council has prepared this Historic Environment strategy to make the most of our unique historic environment, help create a stronger place, ensure a good future for the borough and for the benefit of the people of the borough.

## 6. Understanding our historic environment

### Many places, many histories

Wigan Borough is made up of distinctive communities each with their own unique heritage. This can be seen in the built fabric and historic forms of the towns and villages, the style of buildings and even the use of materials.

The historic environment is not a fixed idea, it changes and evolves. As time goes on, we discover previously unknown sites, learn more about what makes certain things important and gain a new appreciation of elements that were previously neglected or ignored. Understanding the historic environment also involves understanding social and cultural heritage – the way people interact with, or associate with, buildings now and in the past.

The elements that make a heritage asset important are known as its 'significance'. Historic England identifies four main values that contribute to significance:

**Evidential value:** The potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

**Aesthetic value:** The ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

**Historic value:** The ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.

**Communal value:** The meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Anything with a degree of significance can be classed as a heritage asset, although some are given special status in the legal and planning system. These are Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens and Scheduled Monuments, and are referred to as designated heritage assets.

What we have at a glance...

- Over 500 listed buildings and structures
- 23 Conservation Areas
- 12 Scheduled Monuments
- 1 Nationally Registered Park & Garden

What do we have in the borough?

The borough's heritage assets can be generally classified under broad themes or types which are explored below.

### Prehistoric and pre-industrial heritage

There is evidence of prehistoric activity in the borough through occasional finds of stone tools and equipment. Major Roman roads crossed the borough and Wigan itself is likely located in the same position as a Roman settlement known as Coccium. Roman remains have been discovered around the Weind in Wigan town centre.

Pre-industrial history is represented by disparate settlements in the form of large farmsteads or small halls which would have originally been supported by the agricultural produce of the surrounding area. Such settlements still retain their

historic names such as Light Oaks Hall and Byrom Hall. These often belonged to local yeoman families but became isolated as the borough industrialised and they are now easily overlooked remnants of the medieval borough.

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*Definition: **Historic Environment Record (HER)***

*Historic Environment Records are information services that provide access to resources relating to archaeology and the historic built environment. They contain details on local archaeological sites and finds, historic buildings and historic landscapes and are regularly updated. This information is usually held in a database with a digital mapping system for a defined geographic area.*

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## Town Centres

The towns and villages of the borough each have their own centres and characteristics. Wigan is the biggest town and its centre is a superb example of a medieval borough market town with prominent church and medieval burgage plot layout. Leigh and Standish also have medieval cores whilst other town centres were agricultural villages until the 19th century.

The rapid industrial growth of the borough led to large scale expansions of the towns in the form of grid-system streets and terraced rows of workers housing, such as in central Leigh. Some terraced development occurred out-of-town and was related to specific mills or collieries. 19th Century terraced workers housing often has an under-appreciated significance and has been susceptible to gradual erosion. As such, well preserved terraces in the north west of England are now of increasing interest.

Many town centres have high quality building stock typical of 19th Century commercial, retail, and public buildings. These include historic shopping arcades in Wigan, Leigh Town Hall, and many high-quality public houses. However, some buildings that appear 19th Century are reskins of earlier buildings, such as the Whitesmiths Arms in Standishgate, Wigan. These are of more than usual interest as earlier survivors are not always obvious.

Town centres are also most likely to also hold miscellaneous heritage assets such as old stocks, crosses, statues and war memorials.

## Churches

The borough has a large range of ecclesiastical (church) heritage ranging from the medieval period to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Churches are often the largest and oldest buildings in settlements and have strong communal as well as aesthetic and historic values. The oldest and most ornate churches tend to be in the major towns and villages, with St Wilfrid's Church in Standish being the only Grade I listed building in the borough. By contrast, Grade II listed St Jude's Church in Worsley Mesnes, Wigan is made principally from reinforced concrete and dates from 1965.

As well as churches of the major denominations there is a long history of dissenting religion in the borough. There are many good examples of their churches and meeting halls. Top Chapel in Tyldesley is an excellent example.

## Mills

In common with much of the industrial north west, Wigan is known for its textile mills. This industry had its origins in the medieval period but gained prominence in the eighteenth century and flourished until just after World War II. Mills are some of the most prominent and iconic types of building in the borough often covering large areas of land and influencing urban development around them.

Due to rapid decline in the textile industry and the monumental size of many mills, together with associated low-property values, they are one of the most challenging heritage assets. Nevertheless, Wigan is fortunate that some of its biggest mills are located very close to urban centres, such as Trencherfield Mill and Pagefield Mill, and others have active friends of groups such as Leigh Spinners Mill. Wigan has been identified as an Historic England Priority Zone due to its mill heritage.

## Canals

Canals and their associated buildings and structures, such as bridges and locks, are key heritage assets in the borough. Wigan has examples of early canals which are of national and international significance as part of the legacy of the industrial revolution. The Duke of Bridgewater's Canal is widely considered to be the first true industrial canal in the country and was built to provide coal from the mines to the industrial heartlands of Manchester. The canal has had a major influence on Leigh where it joins the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

The Leeds and Liverpool Canal was joined up for its full length east-to-west at Britannia Bridge, Ince. The canal basin at Wigan has proven an important regeneration site through the association with Wigan Pier and there are further opportunities to develop the borough's canal heritage.

The remains of the Douglas Navigation near Shevington and evidence of a very early industrial canal at Haigh Foundry are also important features.

## Railways

Wigan was an early adopter of modern railways due to its position in the Lancashire coalfield. The Bolton to Leigh Railway opened in 1828 and pre-dates the Liverpool and Manchester Railway by two years but nearly all traces of it are now gone. Its route has been adopted by Atherleigh Way.

By 1832 Wigan had a mainline station on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. By 1838 the station had relocated and expanded to the current location of Wigan North Western station. Wigan proved such an important junction that a second town centre station opened in Wigan Wallgate and a third at Wigan Central, now demolished. The Grand Arcade Shopping Centre occupies the site of the former station.

## Mining and Industry

Wigan Borough sits firmly in the South Lancashire Coalfield and the high-quality of the coal means that mining has a long heritage in the area. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century a large part of the borough had become a landscape of spoil heaps and towering pitheads, criss-crossed by a network of mineral railways. The coal from these pits fired the engines of British industry and empire and the towns of the borough became home to the massive mills, weaving-sheds and chimneys that typified the industrial revolution. The profits from these industries not only funded the large houses of the owners but also many public buildings and institutions in the borough.

Today the mines, mills and railways have largely gone but they have left a lasting legacy in the shape of heritage buildings, former colliery sites, disused rail-lines and emerging natural landscapes. Over the past forty years much work has been done to restore, convert and adapt these assets.

Unique to Wigan is the 'greenheart' – former industrial landscapes that are now local nature reserves such as Kirkless and country parks like Pennington Flash

## Historic Halls and Farms

Wigan Borough has many halls and historic farms. The most well-known are the large country houses built for the very wealthiest of the aristocracy, such as Haigh Hall and Winstanley Hall. There are a number of other 'halls', most of which are much more modest as the homes of local yeomen and gentry. As well as being smaller these halls are often earlier in date, some with elements that go back to the late medieval period.

Many of these smaller halls are no-longer family homes but have been split up into multiple dwellings. An example is Dam House, in Astley which is now run by a health and community trust and is open to the public. Many of Wigan's small halls remain in private ownership.

## Importance of Setting

Setting is much more than just about views of the heritage asset. Whilst views and vistas are important, setting is not limited to this. For example, the setting of a stately home such as Haigh Hall could be the extent of its whole grounds.

The view does play a part in the setting and close and wider vistas need to be appreciated and where necessary protected. Given the topography in Wigan, views into the town centre and its wider environs are important where various listed buildings impact upon the skyline, such as All Saints Church and Trencherfield Mill. Other towns and villages with different topographies have their own skyline buildings.

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### *Definition: Setting*

*Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not.*

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## Archaeology

The borough has had a diverse history which is reflected through the archaeological sites that have been recorded. There have been scattered prehistoric finds indicating early habitation, but the first major period represented in the archaeology is the Roman period. We know that the town of Wigan sits on a Roman settlement, some of its remains were located during the construction of the Grand Arcade and Believe Square and there are Roman roads extending through various parts of the borough.

Evidence from the medieval period is likely to be located beneath town centres, around the older halls and moated sites. These may reveal evidence of agriculture and domestic life.

Additionally, there are records of Civil War battles taking place in the borough such as the Battle of Wigan Lane/Bloody Mountains, as well as the potential for early-modern farming and industrial archaeology.

## CASE STUDY: Leigh Spinners Mill

Leigh Spinners Mill is the finest late-era mill in the UK. Grade II\* listed double cotton spinning mill built in 1913, still partially used as a mill and now thriving as a community and business-start-up space.

Peter Rowlinson – Chair of the Leigh Building Preservation Trust

Leigh Spinners Mill creates opportunities for people to bring vacant spaces back into use. The fact it's an old building and is solidly built means it's quite flexible in how we can use the space. Built heritage is important because of its impact on people. We did a consultation about what should happen with the mill, and of 699 people, only 4 said to knock it down. We do things here that the private sector can't, we've got 32 tenants but we have so much space we can fit 80 or 90 businesses.

Fiona Lithgoe – Owner of Cucina Café

I'd never been in before; I'd seen on social media what the Building Preservation Trust were doing here and said to my hubby I wanted to change career – I wanted my own café/bakery. I'm local from Bedford. I loved the idea of breathing new life back to an old building and helping people find the opportunities it has to offer.

We've got a good community here; I couldn't have imagined when I started how good it would be. The sense of community is unbelievable, people come in and are awestruck by what is going on. We've got a 5\* hygiene rating which shows it can be done in a building like this. We do refreshments for the Leigh Film Society, people who go to the archery, bowling or gym. I feel part of the building – part of Leigh's heritage.

## 7. Valuing our historic environment

As this document shows the benefits of a good historic environment are widely acknowledged and far-reaching. The value of built heritage stretches beyond the obvious economic benefits of simply bringing disused buildings back into use or using particularly impressive buildings as a focus of regeneration. Well maintained heritage assets also contribute to health and well-being, informing local identity and creating a sense of place and their re-use can help create a more sustainable and green society.

The priorities identified within the Council's Deal 2030 are 'Our Place', 'Our People' and 'Our Future' and this strategy aligns those priorities, not least in being very firmly rooted in places, how people relate to, and value, those places, and safeguarding those places for the future.

### Growing through heritage

Heritage is often a key part of regeneration programmes, especially in town centres that have strong historic cores such as in Wigan. It is unusual for heritage-led regeneration to take place in isolation. Instead regeneration efforts usually form part of a broader strategy including, for example, the development of disused industrial spaces or revitalising high streets or commercial districts.

We are seeing this in our borough with the regeneration of the Wigan Pier complex into a major leisure destination, in Leigh Spinners Mill which is seeing the transformation into a multi-purpose recreation and commercial venue and in areas like King Street, Wigan and Tyldesley town centre which have utilised heritage buildings and areas to secure High Street Heritage Action Zone Funding.

Heritage-led regeneration also has positive local economic impacts providing employment, training and development for the construction sector as well as providing active use of spaces to encouraging local jobs and entrepreneurship.

There is increasing recognition in the link between heritage assets and a strong economy. There are an estimated 48,000 “heritage related” jobs in the North West and ‘Gross Value Added (GVA)’ is worth £2.7 billion. That is 2% of the entire regional GVA. Nationally, for every £1 GVA generated through heritage, £1.13 is supported in the wider economy.

What this means is that by making places better through investment in heritage assets, it is encouraging people to live, work and spend their money locally, thereby ensuring ‘Vibrant town centres for all’ and ‘Economic growth that benefits everyone’, in line with the Deal 2030.

### Health, wellbeing and heritage

The historic environment has a role promoting mental and physical health and well-being is increasingly being recognised. The positive attributes that the historic environment bring are beneficial not just to individuals but communities at large, creating a link between people and places (see Appendix 2). It is recognised that built heritage is a crucial context in which people build their own identities. The built heritage of an area influences how people live their lives and supports a powerful sense of place, of being and purpose. This is actively demonstrated locally through the use of historic assets and areas such as Mesnes Park and Leigh Cenotaph as familiar landscape features on dementia friendly walks.

Many heritage sites are run by, or supported by, voluntary work. These voluntary positions often lead to a greater range of skills, more confidence, perceived health improvements and general life satisfaction, in both younger and older volunteers. The work at the Lancashire Mining Museum in Astley Green relies on retired volunteers who use their skills and experience to maintain the steam engine and train younger volunteers. Being actively involved in heritage projects like this helps create a sense of community and can help combat social isolation.

Heritage is a resource available to all, it requires no more than your senses to appreciate and enjoy it and it is something that can be instilled at an early age. Research shows that young people who visited heritage sites report higher levels of

self-esteem than young people who did not engage with them. It is partly for this reason that educational visits from schools and colleges often focus on built environment heritage sites.

Given that heritage assets are all around us it is important that these valuable health resources are utilised for the greatest benefit. It is generally perceived that historic buildings are of a higher quality of craftsmanship than new buildings and that better-quality buildings and public spaces improve people's quality of life. For these reasons, well maintained and protected built heritage helps with 'happy, healthy people', an 'environment to be proud of' and 'embracing culture, sport and heritage', in line with the Deal 2030.

## Sport and Heritage

Sport is an important part of the historic identity of Wigan Borough, especially rugby and football. Although many of the historic structures related to sports are gone, the places, social clubs and pubs still survive and are important community assets with great communal value. Many organisations and social groups utilise our built heritage to support their work. Two examples are: Active Outdoors lead walking, running and cycling activities across the borough. Their programmes cater for people of all abilities and stages of life and often take advantage of the historic parks, gardens and cemeteries we have in the borough.

Rugby Memories Group, led by the Wigan Warriors Health and Wellbeing Manager, this dementia friendly group recognises that fans socialise and build their memories through sport. The group arranges meetings with current and past players, as well as using historic programmes and artefacts to combat social isolation and loneliness. This has included social visits to rugby pubs' such as the listed and restored Swan and Railway Hotel, Wallgate, with its collection of rugby memorabilia.

## Sustaining the future through the past

The council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and is preparing a climate change strategy. We are facing a global crisis and want our borough to be carbon-neutral by 2038. We are also looking to create a 'circular' economy, focusing on recycling, reducing emissions and ensuring a cleaner, greener and healthier borough for future generations. Our planet is a finite resource and we must do what we can to conserve it.

The historic environment is also a finite resource that we have a responsibility to protect for the benefit of future generations. The two can mutually support each other, the fundamental principle of re-use and adapting older buildings is a form of reusing precious resources and is a sustainable solution.

Older buildings also have 'embodied energy', which is the sum of the energy and carbon that has gone into the construction of the building. That energy and carbon is lost when a building is demolished and it is highly likely that new energy and carbon will have to be used to construct a replacement building.

Traditional building materials such as wood and brick are often more sustainable than modern upvc and reinforced concrete. Timber biodegrades and brick can be re-used whereas upvc and reinforced concrete are very difficult to recycle. Protecting and conserving our heritage assets is therefore an important part of the wider response to environmental sustainability and helping achieve 'an environment to be proud of', in line with the Deal 2030.

## A positive approach to our historic environment

We will take a positive and pragmatic approach to our historic environment; this means being proactive as well as embracing challenges that arise. Proactive engagement is especially important as built heritage assets are often fragile due to their age and, left without intervention, can degrade and lose their significance.

We will celebrate, educate and promote the historic environment through making information available online, publicising heritage events and embedding a culture of stewardship in the community.

We will actively identify heritage at risk, investigate emerging vulnerabilities and recognise the issues and pressures that face the historic environment, as well as capitalising on any opportunities for change that better enhance or preserve heritage assets.

A positive approach also means actively supporting those seeking to help grow our borough to ensure that their plans serve to bring about positive change for our historic environment.

We will encourage developers to engage with the council at a very early stage through the pre-application process. This will ensure that any proposals that may have an effect on heritage assets will be picked up early and properly managed and is an opportunity to achieve the most sustainable outcome for the scheme.

## CASE STUDY: HAIGH KITCHEN COURTYARD

Haigh Hall Kitchen Courtyard was originally the stables of Haigh Hall. The Grade II listed courtyard has been adapted to become the home of independent and artisan retailers, including a florist, bakery, café, craft gallery and micropub.

Julie Dugan – All You Knead Bakery

We've been open four years, we're not local but when we saw the buildings it was very impressive.

We love the historic setting and even in the winter it's nice. The locals enjoy it, we see cyclists, dog walkers, hikers, mums with prams – it can be enjoyed by everybody for a day out. There is a real connection to how the old community here lived and worked and there is still a strong modern community here. It's brilliant that there is such a feeling for the place, so many peoples' memories – we feel like we're part of the history of the place now.

It's a destination venue and on weekends, it can be busier than the high street.

Angela Tickle and Julie Robinson – A.M. Flowers

We're a family run business that started 26 years ago, specialising in fresh and faux flowers for weddings, events, home decor and funerals. We exhibited at a Christmas craft fair at Haigh Hall and then we were asked to take a unit in The Stables Courtyard for the summer season and loved it so much we're still here now. We are local and visited Haigh as children with our families, we know all our fabulous local customers. Haigh has changed dramatically and positively over the years, it is such a beautiful place and our customers and visitors love it. We love it for the history, nature fresh air, food and drink, flowers, history and many activities and attractions, enjoyed by both local and nationwide visitors.

## 8. Managing and protecting our historic environment

### Action Plan

The Action Plan shown in the table below is structured the following 11 objectives:

#### Objective 1:

##### To reduce our Heritage at Risk

Wigan Borough has 7 listed buildings and 2 conservation areas formally identified as being on the Historic England 'Heritage at Risk Register'. This register is drawn up as part of Historic England's Heritage at Risk (HAR) monitoring programme and looks only at Grade I and II\* listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments. Grade II listed buildings are not covered by the 'Heritage at Risk Register'. The Council also has an internal local heritage at risk register that assesses Grade II and other heritage assets at risk in the borough. This will be monitored and updated by the council.

#### Objective 2:

##### To protect and enhance our conservation areas

Each of Wigan's Conservation Areas has a character appraisal with a management plan. Most of these were written over a decade ago and there is a need to update them and make them more consistent. Government advice suggests that conservation areas appraisals should be updated every five years. The Action Plan therefore includes a programme of ongoing review of the borough's 23 conservation area appraisals and managements plans. The order of priority will be established in respect to the most outdated, priority town centres, as these often sustain the most rapid and biggest changes.

### Objective 3:

#### To be proactive in addressing development that harms our historic environment

Planning enforcement is an effective tool to control breaches of planning control. The council has statutory powers through the Town and Country Planning Act to tackle buildings or sites that are harmful to the historic environment. These powers include: Section 215 Notices, Urgent Works Notices, Repairs Notices and ultimately Compulsory Purchase Orders.

The council will always seek engagement with owners and occupiers to try and reach an acceptable solution to a breach of the planning system that is harming the historic environment before using its planning enforcement powers. However, it will use these enforcement powers where necessary after other efforts have failed. As planning enforcement actions are legal proceedings, they are open to appeal and can lead to lengthy legal cases and high costs.

### Objective 4:

#### To identify and secure new funding opportunities

The council has recently been successful in a number of heritage bids including the High Street Townscape Heritage Initiative and High Street Heritage Action Zones. The council will continue to deliver these projects and programmes and will seek to secure as much as can be achieved from each. The council will continue to raise awareness of, and apply for, external funding opportunities to improve the historic environment, from Historic England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other funds.

### Objective: 5

#### To work with others to endeavour to be an exemplar in the management of its own historic assets

The council recognises its role in protection of the historic environment not only as an owner of heritage assets and as the local planning authority, but also as an ambassador for the historic environment. As such the council will aim to be a

pragmatic advocate of conservation and pursue best practice when it comes to the management and development of heritage assets or development that would affect heritage assets.

This will include seeking re-use of existing heritage assets in line with conservation principles, undertaking sympathetic repairs and replacements including use of traditional materials and skills where appropriate. The council will consider proposals for council owned heritage assets to be transferred to the community or leased to third parties. In such cases robust plans will be sought for the continued protection of the historic significance. Where possible we will encourage the opening of council owned buildings for Heritage Open Days and support other public and private bodies to do the same.

#### Objective 6:

##### To work effectively with owners of heritage assets

The majority of heritage assets in the borough are not owned by the council. The council will seek to work proactively with the owners and other interested parties to realise solutions that provide the best outcome for the heritage asset. In instances where owners do not engage or take a proactive approach to address issues associated with their own historic buildings, the council will exert pressure on the owner to take appropriate action. The council's response will be considered on the merits and circumstances of each individual case and will reflect that the resource implications to the council can be considerable where an owner is not willing or able to engage. The approach adopted will vary but may include: the use of legal powers (such as Urgent Works Notices); enforcement action; and undertaking feasibility work to assess the potential viability of repair/refurbishment.

Related to this, it may be appropriate for the council to explore the preparation of development briefs for major sites such as former mills and other key listed sites to help guide development, realise heritage potential, and help facilitate economic regeneration in the borough.

### Objective 7:

#### To promote good practice in historic environment conservation

The council has a role to play in providing good quality advice and good practice to owners and stakeholders in the borough. This will be achieved through producing locally relevant guidance and signposting to national good design guidance and policies. The council will ensure that these resources are available online and are advertised and promoted.

The council will also facilitate opportunities for educational outreach and training with relation to the historic environment. Similarly, the council will ensure that its internal training and learning programmes help support the promotion of good practice in relation to the historic environment.

### Objective 8:

#### To have a relevant and up-to date policy framework for historic environment conservation

It is important that we have the right policies and supplementary planning documents to support this strategy. The council will ensure that its policies and supplementary planning documents such as its Shopfront Design Guide and others are appropriate and up to date.

We will also explore opportunities for further planning controls and consents such as Article 4 Directions in Conservation Areas.

### Objective 9:

#### To work in partnership with communities and other stakeholders to conserve the historic environment.

The historic environment is there to be enjoyed by all therefore we will seek for all to have a voice in its management. Voluntary groups play a key role in the management and conservation of the historic environment. These groups often take on a role that local authorities are not able to. They are also often a valuable way for individuals to engage with their

local community whilst building their own skills. We recognise and value the work of such groups and will seek to support them in their activities, for example through signposting to relevant information and potential funding opportunities.

We will continue to work closely with statutory bodies such as Historic England and the amenity societies such as the Georgian Society and Victorian Society. We will aim to work with local groups such as the Wigan Civic Voice, Building Preservation Trust and community groups, cultural partners and charities. We will engage with other bodies such as the Canal and River Trust, Bridgewater Canal Company and Natural England that are stakeholders in the historic environment. We will utilise the strong connections of local employers to the area to ensure that it is not only communities but local businesses that are also engaging with the historic environment.

#### **Objective 10:**

**To celebrate our historic environment and promote learning and understanding of it.**

Our historic environment is something to be celebrated and as such we will encourage development, events and programmes that actively seek to celebrate that heritage. We will ensure that the historic environment gets recognition throughout the work of the Council, including through the promotion and support of the position of Heritage Champion for a Member of the Council. We will also encourage appropriate and innovative interpretation on new developments or public space enhancement works.

#### **Objective 11:**

**To ensure our Historic Environment Strategy and Action Plan is delivered**

We will ensure that this action plan is monitored and that it is periodically reviewed and updated. The overall strategy will be monitored through the council's own annual monitoring report.

# ACTION PLAN

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

1. To reduce our Heritage at Risk
  - We will work to protect and remove buildings from the 'National Heritage At Risk' register.
  - We will work to protect and remove buildings from our local heritage at risk register and keep it up to date.
  - We will respond to 'at risk' registers as published by other organisations.
  
2. To protect and enhance our Conservation Areas
  - We will prioritise a programme of ongoing review of our Conservation Area Appraisals.
  
3. To be proactive in addressing development that harms our historic environment.
  - We will be proactive in addressing development, advertisements and other change that has not got planning permission or other consent and is detrimental to our historic environment.
  - We will not allow previous changes that are detrimental to conservation areas to set precedent.
  - We will carry out a scoping exercise for making Article 4 Directions in our conservation areas.
  
4. To identify and secure new funding opportunities
  - We will complete our Townscape Heritage Initiative in Wallgate, Wigan.
  - We will work with partners to deliver our High Street Heritage Action Zone programme for King Street, Wigan.
  - We will ensure that we will pursue funding opportunities when available to help promote conservation of the historic environment.
  
5. To work with others to endeavour to be an exemplar in the management of the councils' heritage assets.
  - We will ensure council owned building stock is maintained to a good conservation standard.

- We will ensure that traditional materials and techniques are used where appropriate.
  - We will prioritise our major assets at risk such as: Haigh Hall and Ince Cemetery Chapels
  - We will ensure major public buildings of heritage significance such as town halls and libraries are maintained
6. To work effectively with owners of heritage assets
- We will work proactively with owners and other stakeholders to seek the best outcome for heritage assets.
  - We will target key-sites such as Eckersleys Mills and Pagefield Mill for reuse or regeneration.
  - We will work with the owners of Winstanley Hall to secure a future for the building.
  - We will support private owners of sites within conservation areas to better appreciate and maintain their properties.
  - We will work with developers of sites intended for development, such as key-housing sites to get the best outcome for our historic environment.
7. To promote good practice in heritage conservation
- We will promote web-based resources to better guide and advise people on the historic environment.
  - We will promote opportunities for educational outreach.
  - We will undertake internal education and training for council officers.
  - We will produce and promote information leaflets for our conservation areas.
8. To have a relevant and up-to-date policy framework for historic environment conservation
- We will ensure we have the right planning policies, supplementary planning documents and other guidance to help deliver this strategy.
9. To work in partnership with communities and other stakeholders to conserve the historic environment
- We will continue to work with Historic England and the recognised amenity groups.
  - We will work in partnership with local groups and communities in developing strategies, plans and programmes for the borough.
  - We will work with cultural partners and charities.
  - We will help integrate built heritage into cultural activity through The Fire Within.
  - We will identify and promote funding opportunities and seek alternative resources.
  - We will engage with local businesses/private companies to support heritage.

- We will continue to support the local community of Tyldesley in the delivery of their High Street Heritage Action Zone.

10.To celebrate our historic environment and promote learning and understanding of it.

- We will encourage and promote the role of National Heritage Open Days.
- We will seek appropriate and innovative approaches to interpretation.
- We will support and promote the position of Heritage Champion.

11.To ensure our Historic Environment Strategy and Action Plan is delivered.

- We will seek engagement across the council to support and deliver this action plan.
- We will monitor the strategy on an annual basis as part of the Council's authority monitoring report within the planning service.
- We will review the strategy and update it when necessary.

## 9. Key Contacts and Organisations

### **Wigan Council Conservation Team**

Web: [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

Email: [planningpolicy@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@wigan.gov.uk)

### **Historic England North West**

Web: [www.historicengland.org.uk](http://www.historicengland.org.uk)

Email: [northwest@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:northwest@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

Tel: 0161 242 1416

### **Canal and River Trust**

Web: [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)

Tel: 0303 040 4040

### **Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service**

Web: [www.salford.ac.uk](http://www.salford.ac.uk)

Email: [gmaas@salford.ac.uk](mailto:gmaas@salford.ac.uk)

Tel: 0161 295 5522

### **Institute of Historic Building Conservation**

Web: [www.ihbc.org.uk](http://www.ihbc.org.uk)

Email: [support@ihbc.org.uk](mailto:support@ihbc.org.uk)

## APPENDIX 1 – Principles to Actions Table

### Theme to Principle

#### Understanding Our Historic Environment

1. We will identify the heritage assets we have in Wigan Borough and their significance.
2. We will broaden our understanding of the borough's historic environment.
3. We will raise awareness of heritage legislation and policies.
4. We will raise awareness of the roles and responsibilities that exist for the historic environment and for owners of heritage assets.
5. We will explore stories of the different places across the borough and engender understanding of how these heritage assets and their history contribute to significance.

#### Valuing Our Historic Environment

6. We will identify the values of our heritage assets.
7. We will capitalise on our under-utilised heritage assets and the potential they have to support redevelopment, regeneration and sense of place.
8. We will secure a wide appreciation of the value of built heritage within the council, partner organisations, owners of heritage assets and local communities within the borough.
9. We will promote and celebrate the value of the historic environment.

#### Managing Our Historic Environment

10. We will identify those heritage assets 'at risk' and prioritise them for positive intervention.
11. We will establish a proactive and positive approach to management of the borough's heritage assets including early intervention and use of statutory powers where necessary.
12. We will identify opportunities to develop heritage assets and enhance and promote their values.
13. To work with others to endeavour to be an exemplar in the management of the council's heritage assets.
14. We will work with public and private stakeholders to encourage, advise and support positive management of heritage assets.
15. We will establish a positive action plan and, through that, strengthen our legacy for the future.

### Action to Principle

- Action: We will work to protect and remove buildings from the 'National Heritage At Risk' register. (Principles 4, 10, 11, 14)
- Action: We will work to protect and remove buildings from our local heritage at risk register and keep it up to date. (Principles 1, 2, 6, 10, 14)
- Action: We will respond to 'at risk' registers as published by other organisations. (Principles 4, 10, 11, 14)
- Action: We will prioritise a programme of ongoing review of our Conservation Area Appraisals. (Principles 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12)
- Action: We will be proactive in addressing development, advertisements and other change that has not got planning permission or other consent and is detrimental to our historic environment. (Principles 3, 4, 10, 11, 14)
- Action: We will not allow previous changes that are detrimental to conservation areas to set precedent. (Principles 9, 11, 14)
- Action: We will carry out a scoping exercise for making Article 4 Directions in our conservation areas. (Principles 8, 14)
- Action: We will complete our Townscape Heritage Initiative in Wallgate, Wigan. (Principles 5, 7, 12, 14)
- Action: We will work with partners to deliver our High Street Heritage Action Zone programme for King Street, Wigan. (Principles 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14)
- Action: We will ensure that we will pursue funding opportunities when available to help promote conservation of the historic environment. (Principles 7, 9)
- Action: We will ensure council owned building stock is maintained to a good conservation standard. (Principles 7, 12, 13)
- Action: We will ensure that traditional materials and techniques are used where appropriate. (Principles 8, 13)
- Action: We will prioritise our major assets at risk such as: Haigh Hall and Ince Cemetery Chapels. (Principles 5, 7, 9, 10, 13)
- Action: We will ensure major public buildings of heritage significance such as town halls and libraries are maintained. (Principles 5, 7, 9, 13)
- Action: We will work proactively with owners and other stakeholders to seek the best outcome for heritage assets. (Principles 7, 8, 14)
- Action: We will target key-sites such as Eckersleys Mills and Pagefield Mill for reuse or regeneration. (Principles 5, 7, 9, 10, 13)
- Action: We will work with the owners of Winstanley Hall to secure a future for the building. (Principles 7, 8, 14)
- Action: We will support private owners of sites within conservation areas to better appreciate and maintain their properties. (Principles 3, 8, 11, 14)
- Action: We will work with developers of sites intended for development, such as key-housing sites to get the best outcome for our historic environment. (Principles 8, 11)
- Action: We will promote web-based resources to better guide and advise people on the historic environment. (Principles 3, 4, 8, 9)
- Action: We will promote opportunities for educational outreach. (Principles 5, 7, 9)
- Action: We will undertake internal education and training for council officers. (Principles 9, 13)
- Action: We will produce and promote information leaflets for our conservation areas. (Principles 3, 4, 9, 11)

- Action: We will ensure we have the right planning policies, supplementary planning documents and other guidance to help deliver this strategy. (Principles 3, 4, 6, 11)
- Action: We will continue to work with Historic England and the recognised amenity groups. (Principles 6, 7, 8, 9, 14)
- Action: We will work in partnership with local groups and communities in developing strategies, plans and programmes for the borough. (Principles 6, 7, 8, 9, 14)
- Action: We will work with cultural partners and charities. (Principles 6, 7, 8, 9, 14)
- Action: We will help integrate built heritage into cultural activity through The Fire Within. (Principles 5, 7, 9)
- Action: We will identify and promote funding opportunities and seek alternative resources. (Principles 7, 12)
- Action: We will engage with local businesses/private companies to support heritage. (Principles 4, 9, 12, 14)
- Action: We will continue to support the local community of Tyldesley in the delivery of their High Street Heritage Action Zone. (Principles 5, 8, 7, 13, 14)
- Action: We will encourage and promote the role of National Heritage Open Days. (Principle 9)
- Action: We will seek appropriate and innovative approaches to interpretation. (Principles 2, 9)
- Action: We will support and promote the position of Heritage Champion. (Principles 8, 13)
- Action: We will seek engagement across the council to support and deliver this action plan. (Principles 8, 13)
- Action: We will monitor the strategy on an annual basis as part of the Council's authority monitoring report within the planning service. (Principle 15)
- Action: We will review the strategy and update it when necessary. (Principle 15)

## APPENDIX 2 – Historic Environment Wellbeing Matrix

This matrix sets out the emerging principles that underly the benefits of heritage in a health and wellbeing context.

### Pro-active Prevention

#### People

##### Healthy, productive population by:

- Equality of Opportunity
- Empowerment in local decision making; Creative engagement with research outputs, historic environment, knowledge and artefacts (festival of archaeology, heritage schools, community archaeology.
- Building processes to ensure local people are included in change and decisions (co-production models)

#### Place

##### Making local place as healthy as possible though:

- Events, activities and use of space
- Fit for Purpose buildings and services; Creative engagement with research outputs, historic environment, knowledge and artefacts (communication, dissemination, events, campaigns.)
- Planning and conservation advice, place-based activity with local authorities, prioritisation

### Responsive Healing

#### People

Wellbeing for individuals in most need through:

- Healing and therapeutic response to need; Buildings skills and learning. Targeted volunteering, focused archaeology programmes.

Social prescribing, Development-led archaeology

#### Place

Addressing community need in local places:

- Neighbourhood character Managing impact of change and loss; Development advice, responding to regeneration projects through specialist advice
- Heritage at Risk and responding to loss and neglect through advice, grants and community