

# Historic Environment Strategy Consultation Report

## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the feedback received through public consultation on the draft Historic Environment Strategy. The public consultation ran between the 23 October to 9 November 2020 and was conducted online. The draft Historic Environment Strategy was published alongside a survey, and a communications campaign encouraged people to share their views.

## Summary of responses

A total of 442 responses were received. This is considered to be a strong response rate for a consultation on a strategy document of this nature.

A breakdown of responses by question is provided below:

### Q1. How would you describe your interest in the Historic Environment Strategy? (Tick all which apply)

The majority of respondents (92%) were local residents.

406 (91.9%)	Local resident
40 (9%)	Local group representative
34 (7.7%)	I work in the local area
13 (2.9%)	I own a business in the area
35 (7.9%)	I regularly visit the area
10 (2.3%)	Other

### Q2. Do you think it is important that we have a historic environment strategy? (Tick all that apply)

Almost all respondents (99%) said that it was important to have a Historic Environment Strategy.

409 (92.5%)	Yes, in order to protect our heritage
162 (36.7%)	Yes, in order to prioritise our actions
231 (52.3%)	Yes, in order celebrate our heritage
165 (37.3%)	Yes, in order to help guide development
4 (0.9%)	No, I do not think it is important

### Q3. Which heritage asset(s) in the borough are most important to you? (For example, this may be a particular building, Conservation Area or monument)

A total of 421 responses were made to this question. A broad range of heritage assets were identified as important including specific buildings, types of buildings but also other features of the borough. The heritage assets that were referenced 10 times or more are listed below:

Winstanley Hall (178)

Haigh Hall (124)  
Wigan Pier (40)  
Canals (33)  
Mills (27)  
Churches (24)  
Mesnes Park (23)  
Town Centres (18)  
Plantation Gates (16)  
Town Halls (11)  
Mining (11)

Some responses also noted other things, not directly linked to the historic built environment. These mainly fell into two broad categories: 'woods' (26) and 'green spaces' (14). This indicates other attributes/assets that respondents felt are important to the borough's heritage.

#### **Q4. Do you have any particular concerns about the borough's historic environment?**

A total of 387 responses were made to this question. The majority of responses expressed general concern regarding the deterioration of boroughs' historic environment.

Specific concerns were made about a wide range of issues, in particular:

- the high level of vacancy and disrepair amongst historic buildings;
- a perception that new development is being undertaken in a manner that is detrimental to the historic environment (in terms of poor quality of new development negatively affecting quality of place and also in terms of pressure for redevelopment contributing to wilful neglect and ultimately the demolition of historic buildings);
- concern that private owners are allowing premises to deteriorate;
- perception that the Council does not have sufficient resources/powers or has not used its powers sufficiently to protect the historic environment.

A number of specific building were referenced, most notably Winstanley Hall and Haigh Hall, but also mills (including Eckersley Mill and Pagefield Mill).

#### **Q5. The 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". Do you agree with this vision?**

The majority of respondents (95%) agreed with the draft vision.

420 (95%): Yes  
17 (3.8%): No  
5 (1.1%): Don't know

**Q5a. What would you like to see?**

There were 15 responses from those who did not agree with the vision on what they would wish to see incorporated. Several comments expressed concern that aim tied the value of the historic environment too closely to economic value and also that there was no specific reference to the protection or preservation of the historic environment.

**Q6. The strategy is based upon three themes: Understanding our Historic Environment; Valuing our Historic Environment; Managing and Protecting our Historic Environment. Do you think these themes are the right ones?**

The majority of respondents (96%) agreed with the three themes of the draft Historic Environment Strategy.

423 (95.7%): Yes

13 (2.9%): No

6 (1.4%): Didn't answer

**Q7. There are 11 objectives within our strategy. Please read through each and let us know how strongly you agree with the importance of each.**

At least 92% either strongly agreed or agreed with every objective. Generally, around 75% of respondents 'strongly agreed' with all objectives – a lower level of support was expressed for the objective related to having an up-to-date and relevant policy framework (66% strongly agreed). The highest rates of strong agreement related to: "protect and enhance our conservation areas", "be proactive in addressing development that harms our historic environment", "celebrate our historic environment and promote learning and understanding of it" and "to ensure the Historic Environment Strategy and Action Plan is delivered".

Objective	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Didn't answer
To reduce our heritage at risk	340 (76.9%)	68 (15.4%)	14 (3.2%)	1 (0.2%)	9 (2%)	10 (2.3%)
To protect and enhance our conservation areas	349 (79%)	68 (15.4%)	9 (2%)	0 (0%)	6 (1.4%)	10 (2.3%)
To be proactive in addressing development that harms our historic environment	352 (79.6%)	58 (13.1%)	15 (3.4%)	3 (0.7%)	5 (1.1%)	9 (2%)
To identify and secure new funding opportunities	321 (72.6%)	85 (19.2%)	17 (3.8%)	1 (0.2%)	5 (1.1%)	13 (2.9%)
To ensure the Council is an exemplar in the management of its own historic assets	332 (75.1%)	80 (18.1%)	11 (2.5%)	0 (0%)	10 (2.3%)	9 (2%)
To work effectively with owners of heritage assets	328 (74.2%)	90 (20.4%)	5 (1.1%)	1 (0.2%)	7 (1.6%)	11 (2.5%)
To promote good practice in historic environment conservation	329 (74.4%)	87 (19.7%)	8 (1.8%)	0 (0%)	7 (1.6%)	11 (2.5%)
To have a relevant and up to date policy framework for historic environment conservation	291 (65.8%)	117 (26.5%)	11 (2.5%)	2 (0.5%)	6 (1.4%)	15 (3.4%)
To work in partnership with communities and other stakeholders to conserve the historic environment	332 (75.1%)	83 (18.8%)	10 (2.3%)	0 (0%)	6 (1.4%)	11 (2.5%)
To celebrate our historic environment and promote learning and understanding of it	344 (77.8%)	73 (16.5%)	10 (2.3%)	0 (0%)	6 (1.4%)	9 (2%)
To ensure our Historic Environment Strategy and Action Plan is delivered	345 (78.1%)	73 (16.5%)	9 (2%)	0 (0%)	6 (1.4%)	9 (2%)

**Q8. Our action plan sets out what needs to be done by the Council, community and wider partners to meet the objectives of the strategy. Do you think that this captures the main priorities for action?**

The majority of respondents (90%) agreed with the actions proposed in the draft strategy.

396 (89.6%): Yes

33 (7.5%): No

13 (2.9%): Don't know

**Q8a. What other actions do you think should be included to meet the objectives?**

A total of 30 responses were made to this question. The majority of these responses expressed concern that the council had not engaged with the community and failed to represent the wishes of the community. Some specific issues were raised regarding the council's role in relation to Haigh Hall and the Lancashire Mining Museum. It was suggested that better engagement and communication be included as a specific action in the strategy. There were also several respondents who wished to see a focus upon ensuring that private owners are held to account where they neglect their historic properties.

### **Q9. Have you ever attended any National Heritage Open Day events?**

Just over one fifth of respondents had attended a National Heritage Open Day event. The most common reason expressed for not attending Heritage Open Days was not being aware of them (258).

99 (22.4%): Yes  
334 (75.6%): No  
9 (2%): No

### **Q.10 Are you involved in any heritage organisations or groups?**

Approximately, one third of respondents (117) are involved in a heritage organisation (110 specified the name of the organisation(s) they are involved in). A large proportion of respondents are involved in local heritage groups (76), approximately half of these are involved in Save Winstanley Hall and the remainder reflect a wide range of local interest groups across the borough including: Friends of Haigh Hall (Heritage and Open Access for All), Wigan Local History and Heritage Society, Lancashire Mining Museum, Environment and Heritage Network, Leigh Building Preservation Trust and Wigan Building Preservation Trust (note, this is not exhaustive). The remainder are involved in regional or national organisations such as National Trust, Canal and River Trust and English Heritage. Over 100 of those not currently involved in a heritage organisation expressed an interest in becoming involved in the future.

117 (26.5%); Yes  
318 (71.9%): No  
7 (1.6%) Didn't answer

### **Q11. Do you have any further comments on the draft Historic Environment Strategy?**

A total of 147 respondents gave further comments on the draft Historic Environment Strategy. There was an approximately equal split between comments that were clearly positive (28) and clearly negative (26) however, the majority of comments had elements of both positivity and negativity or were subject specific (for example, related to the need for funding, action, communication, greater powers).

A clear concern was expressed amongst respondents about the loss/deterioration of the historic environment - both in general and in relation to specific buildings in the borough, most notably Haigh Hall and Winstanley Hall. There is a perception that the Council should have been more active in the protection and conservation of historic buildings in the past.

The need for better communication between the Council and community emerged as a key theme across responses to this question.

Many comments may be characterised as 'cautiously positive', welcoming the strategy but concerned about the deterioration of heritage in the past and concerned that in the future there is better communication and tangible delivery of actions to protect and conserve the historic environment.