Topic Paper 5: Heritage and Built Environment Summary

Introduction

Knowsley's historic environment is varied, encompassing medieval settlements, estate landscapes, industrial heritage, historic transport infrastructure, ancient field patterns and landscapes and twentieth-century planned communities. The Local Plan process presents an opportunity to place heritage and place-based design at the centre of regeneration, ensuring growth is delivered in a manner that protects local distinctiveness, reinforces community identity and safeguards the borough's heritage assets for future generations.

Context

The historic environment is protected through a range of legislation. Key legislation includes:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

These place a duty on local planning authorities to consider the desirability of development conserving and enhancing designated heritage assets (e.g. listed buildings and conservation areas) and appropriately managing archaeology.

Knowsley's historic environment includes:

Heritage Asset Type	Number of assets
Listed Buildings	106
Conservation Areas	15
Registered Parks and Gardens	2
Sites/buildings/structures/areas and landscape features recorded on the HER (*as at September 2026)	1,998

These heritage assets collectively represent the physical legacy of over a thousand years of settlement, agricultural activity and land management, industry and landscape change in the Knowsley area.

Key policies, plans and strategies

The National Planning Policy Framework requires local authorities to:

- Set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.
- Recognise heritage (including non-designated heritage assets) as an irreplaceable resource and take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, including their settings.
- Maintain access to a Historic Environment Record (HER).

Historic England produces a range of advice notes which promote evidence-based management of heritage. These include guidance conservation area management including character appraisals informing design and heritage policies, guidance on the methodology for assessing site allocations, and guidance on taking account of archaeological matters in Local Plans.

Key issues to be addressed by the Local Plan

- Approximately 10% of listed buildings in Knowsley are 'at risk' due to vacancy, underuse and deterioration through lack of maintenance and/or vandalism
- Incremental changes are affecting the character of places and heritage assets through unsympathetic alterations to features and materials and the demolition of unlisted heritage assets.
- Adaptation presents challenges including retrofitting climate change adaptation measures to historic buildings requires balancing environmental performance with conservation of historic details and character. Ensuring changes are compatible with historic construction to avoid problems such as damp and rot developing (e.g. ensuring historic buildings can still 'breathe').
- Further work is needed to better understand:
  - The character and appearance of a number of Knowsley's conservation areas.
  - The characteristics of vernacular architecture in the region.
  - The locations and importance of historic agricultural landscapes and field systems.
  - The level of survival and condition of historic bridges, watch- and tool-making workshops and 20th century wartime heritage.
- Heritage-led regeneration of historic buildings and places can support town centre regeneration, economic growth, high-quality jobs, tourism, cultural activities, community cohesion and local identity.
- Making information about non-designated heritage assets more accessible could encourage broader awareness of local heritage, inspire local pride, and discourage undesirable changes to, or loss of, heritage assets.
- Where relevant and necessary, updated Conservation Area appraisals and management plans would clarify heritage significance of conservation areas,

guide the design and location of new development, identify emerging threats to local character and suggest management strategies, and support decision-making in planning policy and development management.

- The Local Plan can strengthen place-making through including local area-based design policies, requiring context-sensitive development, protection of views, landmarks and heritage assets and their settings, and the retention of traditional buildings, materials and detailing, and requirements to reflect these in new development.