C.12 Consultations and planning casework

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One of the primary roles of local-authority archaeological and historic buildings services is to provide advice on the implications of development and land-use change to local planning authorities and to other organisations and individuals. For many services, planning applications form the largest element of their conservation workload. However, consultations also include those relating to tree planting, hedgerow removal, agri-environmental schemes and the activities of statutory undertakers.

Given the importance of this advisory service, and its relevance to monuments, the built heritage and to areas of land, it is important that details are accurately recorded and linked to the HER databases.

C.12.1 The archaeological conservation process[#](#)

The process of archaeological conservation in relation to land-use proposals is a clear, established system, based upon the procedures used in other areas of environmental management.

The key elements of the conservation process can be summarised as:

- **Appraisal**: this first stage involves the conservation archaeologist considering an application or enquiry and using the HER and any other readily available information to provide a professional judgement as to the impact of the proposal on the historic environment.
- **Assessment**: if an impact is likely to occur, and there is insufficient data in the HER to make an informed judgement, then the conservation archaeologist will make a recommendation. This may be that the applicant or organisation be asked to provide the result of a professional archaeological assessment involving a desk-based assessment, field evaluation or building assessment.
- **Mitigation**: on the basis of the assessment phase, an appropriate conservation recommendation can be made in order to mitigate any adverse impacts that may result from a proposal.

In practice, archaeological conservation is rarely straightforward and is often complicated by the policies, attitudes and resources of other organisations involved in the process. Any record system must be flexible enough to accommodate variability whilst avoiding excessive detail (making maintenance unrealistic for a busy archaeological service). Additional detailed information will remain within the casework files, linked to any computer system.

C.12.2 The historic buildings conservation process[#](#)

The process of historic buildings conservation in relation to planning proposals is similar to that for archaeological conservation. Until recently, HERs and Historic Buildings Records were maintained in separate local government departments. HERs include historic buildings and some services and are now bringing together advice for archaeology and historic buildings. However, this is a new and developing area for many and it is difficult to offer guidance at this stage. Accordingly, this topic will be expanded in future editions of this manual.

C.12.3 Why record conservation advice?#

There are several reasons for recording the conservation process on a database:

- **Consistency**: it is important to ensure that responses to consultations are consistent with, or at least taken in the context of, previous advice.
- **Monitoring**: as casework progresses through the conservation cycle, it needs to be tracked. Often projects can last several years and the database should contain sufficient information to enable an archaeological officer to understand the current status of any particular project.
- **Statistics**: local clients/partners and organisations involved in national research often request statistics about conservation advice and the HER should be able to produce this in a variety of forms.
- **Searching**: the database can act as an index to the more detailed casework files held elsewhere in hard copy format.

ALGAO:UK, which represents the majority of local-authority archaeological services in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Isle of Man has begun the process of undertaking annual surveys of its membership to gather information on conservation casework. This will enable the identification of national trends and gauge the effectiveness of policy and legislation relating to the historic environment.

C.12.4 Consultation record and recommendations#

Any information system needs to be sufficiently flexible to be able to reflect the complexities and iterative nature of the consultation process. The details of incoming consultations should be recorded as well as the details of outgoing advice. It should be possible to record not just the initial response to a consultation (for example a desk based assessment), but also any subsequent recommendations (for example a field evaluation or mitigation recording). To complete the picture, the recommendation should be linked to any resulting event(s) (see Figure 24).

Figure 24: Consultation and conservation advice.

Consultation data#

A typical consultation record for a planning application from the North Yorkshire County Council HER which uses exeGesIS SDM Ltd?s HBSMR software, version 3.04 is shown in Figures 25 and 26. Other types of consultation, such as countryside management works, are each recorded slightly differently depending on how we use the data for statistical and other purposes.

Figure 25: A typical consultation record from the North Yorkshire County Council HER showing the details tab (North Yorkshire County Council and exeGeSIS SDM Ltd 2007).

The Details tab records the baseline information about the consultation, in this example, a full planning application.

- **Organisation and Contact** record the Local Planning Authority and planning officer
- **Applicant and Agent** are self-explanatory
- **External reference number**: this is used to record the unique external reference number allocated by the consulting body (such as the planning application number) or by the conservation archaeologist where no other acceptable reference is available.
- **Case Officer** records the curatorial archaeologist dealing with the consultation
- **Log Date** records the date the planing application appeared on the weekly list
- **Target Date** records the date the consultation response is required by
- **Consultation**: this is used to record the nature of the consultation, for example what type of planning application, whether it is a pre-application enquiry from a developer or a countryside

management scheme. The terms that can be used in North Yorkshire are controlled by a look-up table based upon a locally-adapted version of the ALGAO Consultation Type wordlist.

- **Development Type** records the general nature of the development or land-use change proposal. The terms that can be used in North Yorkshire are controlled by a look-up table based upon a locally-adapted version of the ALGAO Work Proposed wordlist.
- **Site name**: it may be useful to record a site name or plot number, especially if different to the location, as many developments have distinctive names which are not part of the subsequent address.
- **Parish records the civil parish in which the proposal is located. In North Yorkshire each parish has a four-figure code, the initial number of which identifes which of each of the seven districts it is part of.**
- **Location**: this records the address of the site in question or the broad area under consideration.
- **Proposal** records in more detail than Development Type the nature of the consultation proposal

Recommendation data[#](#)

The Consultation Stages tab is used to record the advice given and subsequent stages relating to that consultation, as well as the dates these occurred.

Figure 26: A typical consultation record from the North Yorkshire County Council HER showing the Consultation Stages tab and the link to the related event record (North Yorkshire County Council and exeGeSIS SDM Ltd 2007).

Stage In North Yorkshire, this has been simplified and all are classed as ?curatorial work?.

Action In this example of the North Yorkshire planning application, each of the stages visible in Figure 26 record when the consultation was sent by the LPA, the advice given and when (in this instance, for evaluation by trial trenching), the preparation of a WSI and the date, and the receipt of the evaluation report, and date. A further four stages that are not visible in Figure 26 document the subsequent advising of a watching brief, the preparation of a WSI for this, the receipt of the report and the advising of compliance with the archaeological condition. The terms used are controlled by a look-up table.

Stage Start and Completion Dates (see Figure 26) for:

- Stage 1: records when the application was requested and received respectively (in this example the application was sent to us automatically, so only an end date is recorded). This allows us to distinguish between those planning applications that we request and those that come to us direct, and also to record the length of time between request and receipt.
- Stage 2: Start date is when the application was received. Completion Date is when the advice was given/sent. This stage allows us to prepare statistical information for our local performance indicator based up the length of time taken to respond to planning application consultations.
- Stage 3: Only Completion Date is filled in to record when a WSI was prepared. This stage can also be used to record ?WSI Agreed? if a WSI is sent to us for comment and agreement. In this instance Stage Start date can be completed to record when the document was received.
- Stage 4: records when a report has been received in the Completion Date. This data is also recorded in the corresponding Source record for the report.

Overall Outcome records the final outcome of the Local Planning Authority?s decision on the planning application. The terms that can be used in North Yorkshire are controlled by a look-up table based upon the ALGAO Final Outcome wordlist.

Date Completed is used in North Yorkshire to record when the intial consultation response was made (in this instance the same date as for the Completion Date of Stage 2).

A slightly different approach has been taken in Tees Archaeology's system. The first image (Figure 27) shows the main details about the consultation, in this case another planning application.

Figure 27: A typical consultation record from the Tees Archaeology SMR showing the Main tab (Tees Archaeology 2015)

In Figure 28 we can see the details of the actions taken by the curators, recording their advice and what happened.

Figure 28: A typical consultation record from the Tees Archaeology SMR showing the Details tab (Tees Archaeology 2015).