

Guide to Making Historic Buildings More Energy Efficient

Report of the Planning Portfolio Holder and Climate Emergency and Countryside Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

1. That the **Guide to Making Historic Buildings More Energy Efficient**, attached as an Annex to the report, be approved.
2. That the **Head of Planning and Building** be given delegated authority to make changes of a minor nature prior to publication, and in future in response to changes in national and local policy and guidance.

SUMMARY:

- The report recommends that the appended *Guide to Making Historic Buildings More Energy Efficient* is approved and published as an information resource for councillors, homeowners/occupiers of historic buildings, professional agents, parish/town councils, council officers, and other parties with an interest in the historic environment in Test Valley.
- The preparation of such a guidance resource was an action in the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan (2024).
- The document is intended to sit alongside the national guidance and policy available on this subject, and signposts to those documents.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report recommends that the appended *Guide to Making Historic Buildings More Energy Efficient* is approved. Subject to the recommendations being supported, this document would be published on the Council's website as an information resource for anyone with an interest in the historic environment in Test Valley.

2 Background

- 2.1 There is a significant volume of national guidance relating to energy efficiency, retrofit, and low carbon energy measures for historic buildings which sits alongside national and local policy, including a suite of documents produced by Historic England. This guidance covers in general terms, topics such as insulation, solar panels, air-source heat pumps, and works to windows and doors. This guidance is readily available from Historic England's website. There is also other guidance both from a heritage perspective and from a climate change perspective produced by a number of national bodies,

including the Low Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI). The guide brings those sources of information together and puts that into a local context for the borough. It is designed to enable people considering changes to historic buildings, to improve the energy efficiency of their properties or to generate sustainable forms of energy, to understand how best to approach these matters to make informed choices about what might be most suitable for the property in question. The guidance relates to listed buildings, those situated inside a conservation area and non-designated heritage assets (those that have no formal designation).

- 2.2 There has been a common misconception that it is not possible to alter/adapt historic buildings in order to improve their thermal performance and accommodate small-scale energy generation measures. This is not the case, but careful thought and a 'whole-house approach' needs to be applied to ensure the measures are effective and appropriate. Additional permissions, such as listed building consent, may also be needed. However, there are also 'quick wins' which may not require significant alterations to buildings and are relatively inexpensive, which may improve the situation, and do not need any additional formal consents. The guidance note provides clear information on the options which can be considered.
- 2.3 Further to discussion at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee last year, relating to the scope for historic buildings to incorporate changes which improve their performance and produce green energy, and an agreed action in the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) (2024), guidance which is bespoke to Test Valley and reflects the types of historic building prevalent locally and the character of the area has been developed. This guidance is not intended to replace the more detailed national guidance available, but it draws upon it to help people make informed choices about their premises and provides signposting to where that more detailed guidance may be found. The Test Valley guidance is therefore consistent with national and local policy and guidance.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The guidance note aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan and Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- 3.2 The Corporate Plan includes a strategic priority relating to the environment and the intention to work towards a greener borough for our communities. As part of this, it reflects on the importance residents place on tackling climate change and the role the Council can play in supporting communities to adapt to the challenges presented by climate change. This guide enables the Council to share information on best practice with residents and other interested parties to help understand the opportunities and factors that need to be considered when looking at carrying out changes to historic buildings.
- 3.3 An action is set out in the Climate Emergency Action Plan (2024) that states the Council will "produce a guidance resource on heritage assets for energy efficiency & renewable energy proposals". The approval of this document will ensure this action is completed.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 The guidance note has been reviewed by the Climate Emergency Working Group, and their feedback has been incorporated into the document recommended for approval.
- 4.2 The document is an information note giving guidance on technical matters relating to possible changes to historic buildings, which is consistent with national and local policy and guidance as explained above. It has not been subject to wider public consultation.

5 Options

- 5.1 The options to consider are whether to approve the *Guide to Making Historic Buildings More Energy Efficient* for publication, choose not to approve the guidance note, or approve an amended version.

6 Option Appraisal

Option 1: Approve the appended guidance note

- 6.1 If approved, as drafted, the *Guide to Making Historic Buildings More Energy Efficient* will be published as Test Valley Borough Council's own place-specific advice on this matter. It will provide detailed information for homeowners/occupiers, professional agents, council officers, councillors and other interested parties regarding how to approach the issue of improving the performance of historic buildings, and the scope for generating green forms of energy. This will enable informed decisions to be made about which measures might be most appropriate in each case which are in line with more detailed national guidance produced by bodies like Historic England. It will also help dispel some common misconceptions about what is possible for historic buildings. It would also deliver on one of the actions within the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan. This is the recommended option.

Option 2: Do not approve the appended guidance note

- 6.2 If the document is not approved, information will still be available in the form of national policy and guidance, but, without the guide, this detail would not be drawn together in one place focusing on the types of historic building prevalent locally, as a single point of reference. In addition, whilst useful, these existing sources of information are not bespoke to the character of Test Valley or the typical building types found in borough.

Option 3: Approve an amended version of the guidance note

- 6.3 The appended document has been prepared by a consultant with expertise of working in this specialist field, along with input from officers and the Climate Emergency Working Group. It seeks to provide a level of information which reflects national policy and guidance in a form which is both accessible and informative to those considering making changes to historic buildings taking into account the local context. This being the case, it is considered that the guidance notice, as recommended for approval, would be a useful source of

information for all those with an interest in the historic environment in Test Valley, and no changes need to be considered. Further changes are not recommended.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 An evaluation of the risks indicates that the existing controls in place mean that no significant risks have been identified at this time.

8 Resource Implications

- 8.1 There are no resource implications for the Council from the approval of the document, as recommended in this report.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 If approved, the appended document would provide an information resource. It would not have any formal status in that it has not been progressed in the form of a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 9.2 There are no significant legal implications of preparing and publishing this guidance. It is intended as an information resource which seeks to be clear that each building will need to be subject to bespoke consideration. While the document also gives an indication of where certain formal consents may be needed, this would need to be checked in each case, based on the specifics of the building and site. This is set out in the guidance.

10 Equality Issues

- 10.1 An EQIA screening has not identified any potential for unlawful discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.

11 Other Issues

- 11.1 Community Safety – no issues have been identified.
- 11.2 Environmental Health Issues – no direct issues have been identified. Those considering undertaking measures to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, or to generate green forms of energy, will need to consider all implications of such changes including the scope of measures to impact upon the amenities of neighbouring properties in terms of noise generation for example.
- 11.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate – One of the actions outlined within the Climate Emergency Action Plan states a guidance resource on heritage assets for energy efficient and renewable energy proposals is produced by the Council. This recognises that historic buildings have a role to play in reducing carbon emissions, to reach a nature-positive net-zero future. This action aligns with the Council's focus to reduce emissions and increase resilience to climate change.
- 11.4 Property Issues – none identified.

11.5 Wards/Communities Affected – the guide would be relevant across the whole borough.

12 Conclusion

12.1 It is recommended that the guide to making historic buildings more energy efficient is approved and subsequently published on the Council's website as a source of information for those looking to make alterations to their historic homes and other premises, whether they be listed buildings, located in a conservation or a non-designated heritage asset. The note will also be of benefit to all those other parties that have an interest in the borough's built heritage.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
<u>Climate Emergency Action Plan (2024)</u>			
<u>Net Zero Carbon Advice Note</u>			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	1	File Ref:	pt4.15
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	9 April 2025