



Historic England

Technical Consultation on Street Naming Historic England Consultation Response

Historic England is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. We are a non-departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). We champion and protect England's historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for.

We welcome the opportunity to submit a response to the *Technical Consultation on Street Naming*, which is focused on Q7 as the question most closely related to our statutory remit.

Q7. Is there anything else that you would like to see included in the regulations/statutory guidance for street names?

Street names can contribute to the quality or identity of historic places, and contribute to their significance: they form an intangible part of their heritage, and can provide a link to the historical associations and uses of the place in question. Historic England would welcome recognition of the heritage dimension in any statutory guidance produced to support the proposed changes, and would be happy to offer assistance in its drafting.

As a starting point, and to further mirror the recent changes in respect of statues, monuments, memorials and plaques, it might be worth reflecting key planning principles in any guidance:

- **Consultation:** beyond just a yes/no vote, consideration might be given to understanding what the local community values or is concerned by in relation to the current street name, and seek suggestions for the new name so that it is truly 'owned' by the community. Guidance might also usefully encourage reference to local historical societies, which may have already done valuable research into local street names.
- **Significance:** the planning context to decisions on statues and other commemorative structures involves understanding the significance, or special interest, of the structure, and the impact of any proposals upon it, and this approach could also be of value in reviewing street names. Understanding significance involves a degree of research, which itself can be informed by the consultation referred to above.

The Government's policy on statues – reflected in Historic England's own [advice](#) – is to 'retain and explain', namely to 'provide thoughtful, long-lasting and powerful reinterpretation, which keeps the structure's physical context but can add new layers of meaning, allowing us all to develop a deeper understanding of our often difficult past'. The retention of street names serves a similar purpose to the retention of

statues, in that it enhances our understanding of our past, with suitable context and a wider narrative provided where necessary and/or practical: this too could usefully be reflected in the proposals for street names as they are further developed.

There is one technical point in the consultation document which may need further attention: reference is made to street names being 'in effect... assets of community value'. They may have value to communities, but it would be worth omitting the term 'assets of community value' to avoid confusion, as this has a very specific and different meaning under the *Localism Act 2011*, relating to buildings or other land which have recently been or are presently used to further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and could do so in the future.

Historic England
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