

Historic England offer new advice on tall buildings



Picture: 20 Fenchurch Street, London ('Walkie Talkie') seen through Tower Bridge, London © Historic England

Historic England has published [advice to guide the planning and design of tall buildings](#). The Government body (previously known as English Heritage) says that tall buildings should make a positive contribution to city life. But, in today's advice it warns that tall buildings, by virtue of their size and widespread visibility, can seriously harm places. It goes on to say that England has seen many examples of tall buildings that have had a lasting, adverse impact on the historic environment. The guidance comes amid a surge in new applications for tall buildings, which need Historic England's advice at the planning application stage.

Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive of Historic England, said:

"There are many tall buildings being proposed at the moment, particularly in London, that could have a profound effect on the character of the place where people, work and live. The aim of the planning system is to deliver economic success whilst reinforcing local distinctiveness. We can do this if we all take real care to ensure that tall buildings are not just beautifully designed, but also in the right place. London's historic environment is one of our greatest assets - culturally, socially and economically. It lies at the heart of London's identity and distinctiveness, and its very success. It is at risk of being badly and irrevocably damaged.

"We have updated our advice on planning for tall buildings so it reflects our recent experience and restates the commitment in national planning policy to protect the historic environment."

The advice is a new edition (last published in 2007) reflecting the National Planning Policy Framework which recognises the importance of protecting the historic environment and the need for high-quality design, as well as a need for sustainable development.

Tall buildings can define the image and identity of towns and cities. They can represent the best of modern architecture and some have been listed as the best examples of their period. However, tall buildings can also harm the qualities that people value about a place by being poorly designed and by being in the wrong location.