



STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

POLICIES OF THE SOCIETY

Advocacy

1 Introduction

Over the last two decades or so there has been an increasing emphasis on the vital role to be played by communities in understanding and consequently valuing and overseeing the fortunes of their heritage and historic environments. This was integral to then *English Heritage's* concept of *Power of Place*, embraced also by national and regional interest groups such as the *Council for British Archaeology*, and community funders and facilitators like the *Heritage Lottery Fund*.

Central to these developments has been an increasing awareness of the important part to be played by the advocacy of interested and appropriately informed local groups; that is, groups with suitable expertise and knowledge of their locality or region, and representative of a constituency or special interests, who might monitor the maintenance, presentation and wellbeing of their local heritage assets and historic environment, to be prepared to make representation when they are compromised or threatened. The West Midlands Group of the Council for British Archaeology has a particularly longstanding commitment to this policy, not only for itself, but also in encouraging local societies to play a more active role.

Such advocacy is well established among some voluntary and community organisations, such as Civic Societies, but is less well developed among the archaeological and historical societies of the west midland region, among them the Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society. However such a role, as a facet of its activities, is entirely within the scope of the Society and entirely consistent with its current Constitution (2012).

Within the second clause of our Constitution, the objectives of SAHS are defined as 'the promotion of the study, awareness, interpretation and care of the historic environment, including its buildings, sites, antiquities and historical records, particularly, though not exclusively, in relation to the County of Staffordshire (historic boundaries¹); for the interest, education and benefit of its Membership and the General Public, by:

- Arranging lecture meetings, visits and excursions of archaeological and historic interest, and other events and gatherings.

¹ 'historic boundaries' refers to local authority areas that historically were a part of the county of Staffordshire, such as Sandwell, Wolverhampton, Walsall and Stoke-on-Trent. Plans affecting such areas might therefore attract comment.

- Sponsoring and undertaking archaeological and historical research, including fieldwork and site excavation work, and subsequently publishing the findings and conclusions. Including publication of Volumes of its *Transactions*.
- Encouraging the preservation of buildings of historical interest and significance, sites of historic and archaeological importance, and other local antiquities.'

The preamble, and more specifically, the third sub-clause, directly enjoins the Society to recognise an advocacy role. This document therefore seeks to outline how such a role might be taken up by SAHS and establish key guidelines on how this should be applied.

2 Our Guidelines

While SAHS is enthusiastic in its commitment to develop and maintain an effective advocacy role, these guidelines seek to balance this ongoing commitment against ensuring a consistency of approach and an ability to sustain and implement our policy.

The Society will only consider offering comment at a strategic level, addressing such as area, development, strategic and infrastructure plans. Furthermore, it will only engage with matters that relate to the core activities and interests of the Society, as defined in our Constitution. Nonetheless, it is recognised that this will embrace broad themes; the Society will only engage with matters relating to the historic environment and heritage, including archaeological sites, historic buildings, townscapes, landscapes; the accessibility, curation, presentation and management of heritage assets and resources of all kinds, including archives, museums and interpretation centres.

SAHS will not normally comment on individual or site-specific planning and development issues or other low level planning issues, such as domestic or commercial alterations and plans, unless the committee of the Society determine that wider strategic issues are involved.

The SAHS committee will determine by vote which proposals and plans it wishes to respond to; however, a pre-requisite to pursuing this will be to clearly determine and minute how and why the matter under consideration may be regarded as strategic in nature and therefore eligible for a response within the spirit of these guidelines. However, as a voluntary group, it cannot be guaranteed that the Society will be capable of pursuing all of the matters brought to its attention; our approach will generally be reactive and selective.

A member or members of the committee may be delegated to make further enquiries and draft recommendations for consideration and adoption by the committee.

Responses made on behalf of the Society must be administered and implemented by members of the SAHS's committee and can only proceed to submission once they have received the approval of the committee by means of a majority vote. Only written submissions will be considered to represent the official view of the Society, and these only when they have been signed by either the Chairman (President) or the Honorary Secretary on behalf of the Society.

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 (date) 21 November 2017
 Review: SA&HS Committee meeting, February 2024