

Sent: 16 May 2019 17:12

To: steve.berry@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Subject: Light Rail (and other rapid transit solutions). Response by Historic England.

Dear Mr Berry,

**Light Rail (and other rapid transit solutions). A Call for Evidence on the opportunities available to introduce new Light Rail Systems or other rapid transit solutions into towns and cities in England.
Response by Historic England.**

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 this Call for Evidence on the following points. We have confined ourselves to those few questions which are relevant to our locus.

Q4 What would the environmental, economic and congestion benefits be?

Our work relates to protecting the whole historic environment of England, and with that in mind, we welcome the opportunity which light rail and trams would make to reducing emissions and therefore assisting in the prevention of climate change. The impacts of climate change in relation to physical risks which threaten the historic environment can be difficult to assess, but it is recognised that the heritage dimension of landscapes, buildings, archaeology, floodplains, coasts and marine environments may be harmed and some specific heritage assets may be destroyed or put at serious risk. Further statements on climate change and the historic environment can be found here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/threats/heritage-climate-change-environment/what-effects/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/statements/climate-change/>

More specifically, there may be benefits to historic towns and city centres through the removal of or reduction in congestion by vehicles. This may be of benefit to listed buildings and to conservation areas where traffic is causing damage through pollution. The reduction of traffic may also benefit the settings of listed buildings and the character of historic urban areas. However, it is worth noting that the construction of light rail and trams may also have a negative impact on historic places, for example by affecting buried archaeological remains or by a need to remove historic infrastructure. The need to construct light rail will need to consider the effects both positive and negative upon the historic environment, as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019).

Q6 Does light rail open up new housing or business developments or improve the urban fabric of the area?

The improvements which light rail may bring to urban areas may dovetail with our own work on improving high streets and historic places. In relation to high streets, this spring we launch a new £40 million fund which will allow us to work with partners to find ways to champion and revive our historic high streets through a High Street Heritage Action Zones scheme. Further information may be found here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/regenerating-historic-high-streets/>

We are also trying to improve towns and cities through our Heritage Action Zone initiative. Working with local people and partners, we are helping to breathe new life into old places by making them more attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors. We are doing this through joint-working, grant funding and sharing our skills. Historic buildings that have deteriorated through decades of neglect are being restored and put back into use, and conservation areas improved to kick-start regeneration and renewal. Again, this work may dovetail with opportunities provided by the introduction of light rail. More information on Heritage Action Zones may be found here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/breathe-new-life-into-old-places-through-heritage-action-zones/>