

Stadium for Bath, Heritage Impact Assessment



Image credit: NPA Visuals

Transformational proposal in the heart of the City of Bath World Heritage Site

CLIENT

Arena 1865 Ltd

LPA

Bath and North Somerset
Council

STATUS

Ongoing

SERVICES

Heritage, Planning, EIA

Our role

- Having provided Planning advice to Bath Rugby Club regarding various proposals at its training ground and headquarter facilities at Farleigh House, our multi-service team was appointed to advise on the realisation of ambitions to deliver a new Stadium for Bath at the Recreation Ground (Rec) in the heart of the City of Bath World Heritage Site (WHS).
- In addition to a Heritage Statement to address legislation, national and local planning policy and guidance, our Heritage team was also appointed to undertake a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for the World Heritage Site.
- During this process UNESCO published its new 'Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context', setting out an updated approach for the assessment of impacts on WHSs, and in 2021 the Great Spa Towns of Europe was inscribed on the World Heritage List. In forming a component part of the trans-national WHS, Bath gained a rare dual inscription; adding further complexity to the HIA process.
- Accordingly, we prepared one of the first HIA reports utilising both the new guidance and assessing the two WHS inscriptions, working closely with Historic England to ensure the assessment work met the requirements of the international ICOMOS Technical Review process as well as engaging with the local authority and stakeholders. The HIA process ran alongside EIA, with the preparation of a Built Heritage Chapter to meet the necessary regulations.

Results

- Rugby has been played at the Rec since 1894, but its stadium fails to meet modern standards or complement the city's historic character. Relocating Bath Rugby would negatively impact the city's economy and culture.
- The submitted applications for planning permission and listed building consent are awaiting determination. In response Historic England confirmed that they agreed with the findings of the HIA and commented: "Historic England's view is that the proposals are a successful result of many years of negotiations. While there remains a degree of less-than-substantial harm, we think that any adverse impact caused by the proposed development on the Outstanding Universal Value of the city's twin World Heritage Sites, on the character and appearance of its conservation area, and on the setting of its listed buildings, has been minimised as far as possible through thoughtful design."
- In May 2025, ICOMOS confirmed that it was satisfied with the information submitted and had no further objections to the proposals.

Turley