



Chapter 9: Recording historic buildings – when it is necessary to record

9. Recording Historic Buildings - When is it necessary to record?

The aims of this chapter

- To explain why historic buildings should be recorded.
- To provide signposts to guidance on the ways in which the wealth of historical evidence embodied in historic buildings can be gathered, recorded and disseminated for the lasting benefit of present and future generations.

This chapter should be read in conjunction with:

- National Planning Policy Framework, (March 2012).
- PPS5: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide, DCLG, English Heritage, DCMS (March 2010).
- 'Understanding Historic Buildings', English Heritage (2008).
- Recording Heritage Assets – How to Compile a Record – Appendix E.

Introduction

9.1 The historic environment is a precious and irreplaceable resource. In order to maintain this resource for future generations, the historic environment must be understood and carefully managed. Historic buildings constitute a rich source of information about the past – about how people lived, worked, worshipped and spent their leisure time. We can learn how buildings were constructed and adorned, the traditions they embodied and the aspirations they expressed.

Why should historic buildings be recorded?

9.2 It is considered important to record historic buildings for the following reasons:

- To promote understanding and appreciation of historic buildings, individually and collectively;
- To inform our day-to-day and long-term management and use of historic buildings;
- To secure understanding of a building and its significance sufficient to inform preparation of a scheme of conservation, repair or alteration;
- To inform decisions relating to a proposed scheme of conservation, repair or alteration;
- To document buildings, or parts of buildings, which may be destroyed, removed or concealed as a result of demolition, alteration or neglect;
- To make the best use of the opportunity provided by the demolition, conversion or large-scale alteration or repair of a building to further our understanding of that particular building and the wider historic environment;
- To assess the significance of groups of buildings and provide a basis for strategic heritage management;
- To inform academic research;
- To provide data for thematic or period-specific studies by recording a sample of surviving structures;

- To deposit a permanent record in an established archive such as the County Record Office. Digital copies should be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) Archaeology Data Service (ADS). Material/ finds should be deposited with a recognised museum or depository.



Fire damage at the Thatch Cottage, Long Marston.

- 9.3 The historic environment is one of the primary sources of evidence of our history. There is a great deal of valuable knowledge still to be gained from it. Safeguarding this new knowledge and making it widely accessible is an important exercise of general public benefit. Recording a building and furthering our understanding of history from that record is obviously more important if it is to be lost, but records of our historic environment are also created as part of the process that local planning authorities follow to build the evidence base for their local plan.
- 9.4 If the recording and analysis is published, placed in the HER and properly archived then the exercise will valuably inform future planning and heritage decisions as well as contribute to our understanding of England's history.



Redundant farmstead at Oakwood Farm, Follifoot. A written scheme of investigation should be carried out to advance understanding of the significance of this undesignated heritage asset and its capacity for change and to inform a future development proposal.

Government Policy Requirement

- 9.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains policies that require recording of a heritage asset where it is to be harmed or lost. The policies apply whether the asset holds an archaeological, historic, architectural or artistic interest. The requirement to record and advance further understanding is to be proportionate to the nature of the significance to be harmed or lost and the importance of the asset.
- 9.6 Section 12 of the NPPF refers to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. It requires local planning authorities to employ a positive approach to the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. It recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, which should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 9.7 Paragraph 128 of Section 12 of the NPPF states that: *'in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary...'*

- 9.8 Paragraph 141 of Section 12 of the NPPF states that: *'local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible'*.
- 9.9 The significance of a heritage asset and the contribution it makes to the area should be duly assessed. If deemed acceptable, prior to significant alteration or demolition (complete or partial), a detailed, comprehensive and analytical record (supplemented by photographs and annotated drawings) should be made of the property internally and externally, including associated outbuildings, where appropriate. This record should include analysis and interpretation to clarify the structure's history insofar as it may be deduced from the structure itself and assessment of the building's significance. This record should seek to advance understanding of the assets' significance and be retained in perpetuity and a copy placed on the HER.
- 9.10 It should be noted that the fact that something can be recorded is not to be a factor in granting consent for works that will result in the loss of historic fabric, as a record is not a substitute for conserving the historic fabric for future generations.
- 9.11 The significance of a heritage asset is defined as: *'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.'* Annex 2: Glossary, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Department of Communities and Local Government (2012).
- 9.12 The recording process is managed through conditions on any permission or consent and sometimes a legally binding Section 106 agreement. These will often refer to and control the operation of a written scheme of investigation which will set out the detail of what is required: to record, analyse, publish and archive.

Written Scheme of Investigation

- 9.13 Although the Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5) has been superseded by the NPPF, the PPS5 Practice Guide is still valid and contains guidance that is helpful in respect of the policy requirements and the standards expected under the NPPF. This guidance will be replaced within the national Planning Practice Guide.

- 9.14 Where development will lead to loss of a material part of the significance of a heritage asset, paragraph 141 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to ensure that developers take advantage of the opportunity to advance our understanding of the past before the asset or the relevant part is irretrievably lost. As this is the only opportunity to do this, it is important that:
1. *Any investigation, including recording and sampling, is carried out to professional standards and to an appropriate level of detail proportionate to the asset's likely significance, by an organisation or individual with appropriate expertise.*
 2. *The resultant records, artefacts and samples are analysed and where necessary conserved.*
 3. *The understanding gained is made publicly available.*
 4. *An archive is created, and deposited for future research.'* (Extract from PPS5 Practice Guide, para. 130).
- 9.15 The record created can be of interest not only to professionals and academics, but also to future owners or occupiers, anyone undertaking work to the building in the future, but also local or national interest groups as well as the local community.
- 9.16 The steps to be taken by the developer to achieve these aims can be controlled through a written scheme of investigation, usually drafted by the applicant. The local planning authority can advise as to what the scheme should cover. Conditions can then be applied to the consent or a Section 106 Agreement entered into to secure the implementation of the written scheme of investigation.

When is it necessary to compile a record?

- 9.17 The table below indicates the kind of record likely to be appropriate in certain generic circumstances and it is useful to refer to this as a guide. It is taken from English Heritage's document entitled 'Understanding Historic Buildings – A Guide to Good Recording Practice' (2008). Further detailed information on the levels of recording, as referred to in the table can be found within Appendix E – 'Recording Heritage Assets – How to Compile a Record.'

Circumstance	Principal Need	Level of Record	Form of Record
Strategic heritage planning at national, regional or local level; studies of landscapes, common building types, areas and larger settlements; pilot projects.	Information on distribution, variation, significance and survival of large building populations, defined geographically, typologically or chronologically, and an understanding of their evolution, to inform national or local policy initiatives, to underpin heritage management decisions or as a contribution to academic knowledge.	Generally low-level record. Building specific information may be highly selective or variable (typically Level 1 or 2, but in some cases 3 or 4).	May make extensive use of external photography, supplemented by written accounts of individual buildings and/or synthetic text providing background or context. Drawn element may be omitted, simplified, limited to maps or restricted to key examples.
Management planning for property portfolios and for individual buildings or sites.	Baseline information on the nature and significance of buildings, providing a foundation for long-term decision making and identifying where further information is required.	For portfolios, a medium-level record (2 or 3), which may vary with the perceived significance of the building; for single buildings or sites the level may be higher (3 or 4).	Measured drawings may form an important and cost-effective component, meeting a range of non-historical as well as historical needs. Where buildings form a tight geographical group, or belong to an historic estate, more extensive documentary research may be practicable.
Proposed alterations to a significant building.	An understanding of the fabric at risk within the context of the building as a whole, and an assessment of its significance, allowing proposals to be formulated and evaluated, and loss minimised; also a record of what is to be lost, where significant.	Variable, depending on the significance of the fabric at risk, and both the complexity and current understanding of the building as a whole and of the class to which it belongs (Level 2-4).	An account of the building as a whole (summary for minor alterations, more detailed for a major intervention), with detailed discussion of affected areas. Measured drawings are more likely to be required for major alterations.
Extensive repairs or alterations to a significant building with complex phases or layers of development.	In addition to the above, detailed information on the nature and development of the building's fabric, in the context of its significance and that of its various parts.	Medium to high (Level 3 or 4).	The drawn record may be more detailed than the norm, to inform step by step decision-making.
Catastrophic damage to a significant building (a major fire, for example).	Where not a prelude to demolition (see below), an understanding of the nature and development of the building's fabric, in the context of its significance and that of its various parts.	Variable, depending on the significance of the building, the extent of loss and safety considerations.	Attention will focus initially on areas most vulnerable to loss (debris, charred timber, water-damaged plaster etc.), which may be recorded in greater detail than normal to assist reconstruction.
Dismantling prior to re-erection.	Detailed understanding of the fabric of the building, and of the craft processes which shaped it.	Medium to high (Level 3 or 4).	The drawn and photographic record is likely to be extensive and will be made both prior to and during, dismantling. Any proposed reconstruction, including departures from traditional practices and materials, may also be documented. In special circumstances and where resources permit, it may be appropriate to undertake additional recording (including the application of excavation-derived 'finds' techniques) during dismantling, or to elucidate the site's context or earlier history through excavation.
Proposed demolition.	Assessment of the significance of the building and a record of what is to be lost.	Variable, depending on the significance of the building. Other things being equal, the level will be higher than for buildings of comparable significance which are not similarly at risk.	



An example of building archaeology at Goldsborough Hall.



An example of building archaeology at Markingfield Hall.



Low Farm, Bishop Monkton, showing evidence of the change within the historic farmstead.

Buildings – A Guide to Good Recording Practice’ (2008). This guidance document categorises appropriate levels of recording. Recording of this heritage asset should be appropriate to level 2, specifically drawings 1-7, photography 1, 2, 4 and written record 1-3, 4(see page 14 para.5.2 and preceding pages for details). Please note: The matrix is a guide. The levels should not be used in isolation, rather regard should be given to all levels. For example Level 3 requires an analytical element and so even a basic level record should include analysis as well.’

Example Condition

9.18 The following is a typical condition that may be applied to a planning consent requiring the heritage asset to be recorded prior to commencement of development: *‘Prior to the commencement of any works, a detailed and analytical record (photographic and detailed drawings with annotations where appropriate) should be made of the property and the outbuildings, internally and externally, to be retained in perpetuity. This record should include analysis and interpretation to clarify the structure’s history in so far as it may be deduced from the structure itself and assessment of the building’s significance in order to advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset. Copies of this record should be placed on the HER and on the relevant Local Planning Authority property file. A copy of the report should be attached to the property deeds to be retained in perpetuity. Reference should be made to English Heritage’s guidance titled ‘Understanding Historic*

Further Reading:

- See Appendix E – Recording Historic Buildings – How to Compile a Record.
- Appendix P – Bibliography.



Roundhouse, Pannal which provides evidence of changing farming practices.