



Historic England

# CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES

FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT

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ENVIRONMENT

## **Introduction**

**1: Historic England's Conservation Principles**

**2: Understanding Significance**

**3: Applying the Conservation Principles**

# INTRODUCTION

1. Research consistently shows that there is overwhelming support for heritage in England. So many people care passionately about their heritage; they want to protect it, but nothing stands still forever. Our understanding changes, the way we protect the historic environment evolves, and new uses for buildings and other spaces emerge. Helping manage that change and continuing to develop our understanding of our heritage are key objectives for Historic England.
2. Historic England will use these Conservation Principles to guide its advice and decisions affecting the conservation of England's heritage. It does not directly address intangible heritage. They will help ensure that Historic England approaches the management of the historic environment in a transparent, logical and consistent manner. Historic England also encourages local authorities, property owners, developers and their advisers to refer to these Principles when considering how to approach a particular proposal or situation that may impact on the historic environment, whether in relation to designated or non-designated heritage assets.
3. The Principles are consistent with:
  - the relevant legislation including the Acts relating to both planning and designation.
  - the objectives and policies for the historic environment stated in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Practice Guidance and the DCMS Principles of Selection.
  - the approach to heritage conservation required of the UK as a signatory to the Council of Europe's 'Granada' Convention (The Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe), 'Valetta' Convention (The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage), the 'Florence' Convention (The European Landscape Convention), and the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention.
  - British Standard 7913 (2013) Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings.
4. In 2008 the Conservation Principles published by English Heritage (which this document updates and revises) described significance in terms of four values: evidential value, historical value, aesthetic value and communal value. In describing significance, this document is more closely aligned with the terms used in the NPPF (which are also used in designation and planning legislation): archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic interest. This is in the interests of consistency, and to support the use of the Conservation Principles in more technical decision-making. It does not preclude or ignore other ways in which Historic England might describe something as significant, and the values referred to above remain part of the palette of terms which may be used to articulate significance. The interests and values referred to above cover the same ground, and provide a framework that can help us describe what we value about our historic environment.

5. All heritage assets have a degree of significance but this is on a spectrum. Those that meet certain thresholds, defined in legislation, are formally protected in the public interest through designation, but these principles are relevant to all assets whether designated or not. These principles apply to all activities affecting the historic environment, including researching and identifying what makes them heritage assets, formal designation processes and managing change to them both through formal systems of control as well as everyday building and site management. These activities – which are core to Historic England’s purpose – are addressed in turn in Chapter 3.

### **Key Definitions**

6. The following definitions are used in this document (drawn from the NPPF):
  - **Historic Environment:** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
  - **Heritage asset:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
  - **Conservation:** The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.
  - **Significance:** 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.

# CHAPTER 1: HISTORIC ENGLAND'S CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES

## Principle 1: **The historic environment is of value to us all**

7. England's historic environment holds a unique and irreplaceable record of past human activity which forms a crucial part of our wider cultural heritage. It reflects the knowledge, beliefs and traditions of diverse communities over time. It gives distinctiveness, meaning and quality to the places in which we live. It is a social, economic and environmental asset, providing a sense of continuity, a draw for overseas visitors and a source of identity, learning and enjoyment.
8. Owners play a central role in conserving heritage assets. However, the competition for land on our small island is such that the long-term public value of heritage assets to this and future generations (including social, economic and environmental benefits) cannot be easily reconciled by market economics with the commercial value of land for development. As such, ensuring that heritage assets are appropriately and sustainably managed has long been a matter of public interest.
9. Each generation should aim to shape and sustain heritage assets in ways that allow people to use, enjoy and benefit from them, without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. The use of law, public policy and public investment is justified in support of this objective because the market alone cannot achieve this balance of private and public interest.

## Principle 2: **Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment**

10. Everyone should have the opportunity to contribute their knowledge of the value of places to assessments of significance and to decisions regarding change. Wider engagement ensures that the full range of perspectives on what makes a place special are understood, as far as practical, and that these views are given consideration in decisions.
11. Experts play a crucial role in discerning, communicating and sustaining the established heritage interest of places, and in helping people to refine and articulate the values they attach to places. However expert a specialist may be about a particular piece of heritage, alternative perspectives are valuable as decision-makers and experts may not be aware of the complete range of views held by people who care about the place.

12. It is essential to develop, maintain and pass on the specialist knowledge and skills necessary to sustain the historic environment and help people articulate and share what they value about particular places.

### **Principle 3: Understanding the significance of heritage assets is the starting point for effective conservation**

13. Understanding and articulating what is significant about a heritage asset is necessary to inform decisions about its future. Good-quality information about an asset will help ensure a decision is well-informed and robust. The degree and nature of the significance determines what level and type of protection, including national or local designation, may be appropriate under law and policy and informs wider future management decisions.
14. Any building, monument, site, place, area or landscape has the potential to be a heritage asset. The significance of a heritage asset embraces all the diverse cultural heritage values or interests that people associate with it. As sites and society change over time, these values or interests will evolve. Many heritage assets are already on the National Heritage List for England, which includes the most important buildings and sites in the country. Historic Environment Records, held at a local level, identify millions of additional sites of interest.
15. In order to identify the full significance of a heritage asset, so far as that is possible at a point in time, it is necessary first to understand its physical fabric, its links with its surroundings (including other heritage assets), together with how and why these have changed over time, and then to consider:
  - who values the heritage asset, and why they do so;
  - how their valuation of it relates to its physical form, fabric and associations;
  - whether associated objects and historical records contribute to its interest;
  - the relative weighting of the heritage asset's interests (some parts may be more important than others); and
  - the relative weighting of the heritage asset's interests with those of other heritage assets, sharing similar interests (some sites or buildings will be more important than others).

### **Principle 4: Heritage assets should be managed to sustain their heritage values**

16. Change in the historic environment is inevitable. It may be caused by natural processes, the wear and tear of use, or how we all respond to social, economic and technological change and changing values. Successful conservation is about

managing change to a heritage asset and its setting in ways that will best sustain the asset's significance, while taking opportunities to better reveal or enhance that significance for present and future generations.

17. Conservation is best achieved when those involved share a common appreciation of an asset's significance, and use that understanding to:
  - identify how its significance is vulnerable to change;
  - take the actions and accept the constraints necessary to sustain, reveal or enhance significance;
  - Take a balanced view where conflict between conservation needs of different aspects of significance requires may require some loss of an asset's significance to secure its sustainable conservation; and
  - minimise loss of its authenticity as a source for future generations by doing invasive work only when any resulting harm to significance is demonstrably outweighed by the heritage benefits of that work.

#### **Principle 5: Decisions about change need to be reasonable, transparent and consistent**

18. Decisions about change in the historic environment demand the application of expertise, experience and judgement, in a consistent and transparent process which is as accessible as possible. They need to take account of views of those who have an interest in the assets affected and/or the changes being proposed.
19. The range and depth of understanding, assessment and public engagement should be sufficient to inform and justify the decision to be made, but efficient and proportionate in the use of resources. Where heritage assets have been designated in the public interest, and made subject to additional controls, proportionality should govern the exercise of those controls.
20. Potential conflict between sustaining heritage significance and delivering other important public benefits should be avoided or minimised by looking at other ways of delivering those benefits. If conflict cannot be avoided, the weight given to heritage interests in making the decision should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset and the impact of the proposed change on that significance.

#### **Principle 6: Documenting and learning from decisions is essential to inform future management**

21. Records of the justification for conservation decisions (including assessments of significance and of the impact of proposals upon that significance), and the actions

that follow them, are crucial to maintain a cumulative account of what has happened to a heritage asset and understand how and why its significance may have been altered. These records should be as physically accessible, and intelligible to non-expert audiences as possible.

22. Managers of heritage assets and responsible public bodies should monitor and regularly evaluate the effects of change resulting from decisions and policies and use the results to inform future decisions and policies.
23. If all or part of a heritage asset will be lost, whether as a result of a decision or an inevitable natural process, its potential to yield information and further our understanding of the past should be realised. This requires investigation, recording and analysis, followed by archiving and dissemination of the results, all in proportion to the asset's significance. The results of investigation and the advancement in understanding of the asset's significance should be made publicly available through relevant archives or records in a reasonable time period to help inform future change affecting similar assets. An asset's form prior to an episode of change should also be captured by proportionate record-making. In many cases this will be through photography. If the recording is necessitated by proposed development, the developer should bear the cost of the exercise.

# CHAPTER 2:

## UNDERSTANDING SIGNIFICANCE

24. We value our nation's heritage for many reasons: distinctive design, inspiring landscapes, the story an asset can tell about our past, its connection with notable people or events, evidence of past society we can or might yet glean, or the role it has played and continues to play as the symbol of a community. We all want to enjoy and sustain that significance for the benefit of present and future generations and to achieve this, there needs to be a reasonable level of understanding of what should be protected.
25. Heritage assets can generate wider social and economic ('instrumental') benefits, for example as a learning or recreational resource, or because they lead to tourism or make a place attractive for investment; they add to the quality of our lives. These benefits are different from heritage interest in nature and effect.
26. The term 'significance' is used in conservation to mean the heritage value of an asset due to its heritage interest – in simple terms, it is the sum total of why a place matters from a heritage point of view. According to this definition, significance is encompassed by four headings: archaeological interest, architectural interest, artistic interest and historic interest. A heritage asset's significance may be expressed under more than one heading and sometimes under all four.
27. Decisions in research, designation, planning and conservation management are informed by the consideration of these different interests, which are explored in more detail below. Assessment for listing (or designation) sites of particular importance is carried out by Historic England on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and uses the criteria set out in DCMS Principles of Selection to establish the special interest necessary for the physical fabric to receive statutory protection. These encompass the interests expressed below but for listing it is often helpful to refer to the Selection Guides (see also para 54 below).

### Historic Interest

28. This is sometimes called historical value. A heritage asset is most commonly valued for its historic interest – because of the way in which it can illustrate the story of past events, people and aspects of life (illustrative value, or interest). When these stories become enmeshed with the identity of a community, in addition to the asset's historic interest it can be said to hold communal value.
29. Some assets illustrate aspects of the past better than others. This aspect of an asset's historic interest tends to be at its greatest if it incorporates the first, only, or

best surviving example of an innovation of consequence, whether related to design, artistry, technology or social organisation.

30. Original fabric is often valuable, particularly where it is associated with an individual or event, and an asset's integrity (completeness) may heighten the ability to illustrate the way past lives were led. 'Time capsules' that vividly capture a particular period or life are very valuable (although in practice buildings or sites that have genuinely not been altered, even on a like-for-like basis, are extremely rare). Sometimes it is the story of change from one fashion or style to another that the asset illustrates and which provides the interest. An asset's ability to illustrate can usually sustain faithful replacement of features, for example the replanting of an avenue of trees, or the careful adaptation of features so that they continue to support the historical narrative. However, the same adaptation may jeopardise the asset's archaeological interest (see below) so prioritisation between interests may sometimes be necessary.
31. The use of a heritage asset for its original purpose, for example as a place of recreation, worship, or manufacture, illustrates the relationship between design and function, and so may make a major contribution to its historic interest. If so, cessation of that activity will normally diminish that interest. Occasionally abandonment, for example as of a medieval village site or an abbey, may itself illustrate important historical events.
32. In addition to its illustrative value, a heritage asset may also be of historic interest because of the meaning of the place for those who draw part of their identity from it or have emotional links to it. The most obvious examples are war and other memorials raised by community effort, which bind certain modern communities with past lives, sacrifices and events of importance to them. They are important aspects of collective memory and identity; places of remembrance whose meanings should not be forgotten. In some cases, that meaning can only be understood through information and interpretation (including designation where appropriate), whereas, in others, the character of the place itself tells most of the story.
33. This communal value can be distinguished from simple usefulness by the essential connection with the history of the asset. Sports venues may be valued for the sense of continuity created by generations of supporters. A faith group identifies with a place of worship because of the tradition of worship there. A publicly-accessible historic landscape, may for some possess only utility value but others may search out such places and feel that the heritage dimension brings a deeper meaning and enjoyment.
34. Historic interest also embodies associative value. Association with a notable person, event, or movement gives an asset a particular resonance and this may be equally as important as its illustrative value. Being at the place where something momentous happened can increase and intensify understanding through linking historical accounts of events with the place where they happened, as can surviving

insights into how past lives were led – provided that the place still retains some semblance of its appearance at the time.

35. Not all associations are positive or straightforward: some heritage is disputed, problematic, or contested. There is no single historical narrative, and all of England's heritage has been and will be understood and valued differently at different times by different people. Public understanding of more challenging heritage is usually harmed by the removal of historic fabric, and reinterpretation at or near the object or site in question can make clear that contemporary values differ from those presented by the asset. Tangible heritage plays a vital role in helping us understand the past, and retaining as much of this primary evidence as possible is critical in our ability to properly understand its realities. In assessing significance, a number of complex and sometimes competing considerations will need to be weighed, and the Conservation Principles in Chapter 1 (above) provide a means of approaching those deliberations.
36. Many heritage assets are associated with the development of other aspects of our culture, such as literature, science, art, music or drama. An asset that is principally valued for its architectural or artistic interest (see below) may also be illustrative of the work of an important architect, engineer or artist and so may hold a degree of historic interest too. For assets that may be of a standard meriting designation, the Principles of Selection and Historic England Selection Guides provide detailed advice.
37. The more social dimensions of communal value tend to be less dependent on the survival of historic fabric. They may relate to an activity that is associated with the place, rather than with its physical fabric, and may survive the replacement of the original physical structure, so long as its key social and cultural characteristics are maintained. Statutory recognition of heritage assets (designation) needs to meet defined standards (para 27). Social value can be the popular driving force for the re-creation of lost (and often deliberately destroyed or desecrated) places with high symbolic value, although this is rare in England.

## Archaeological Interest

38. This is sometimes called evidential or research value. There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity that could be revealed through investigation at some point. Archaeological interest in this context includes above-ground structures as well as earthworks and buried or submerged remains more commonly associated with the study of archaeology. Heritage assets with archaeological interest may be the only source of evidence for human activities in the distant past. Equally, they may contain evidence that complements or contradicts the evidence of written records or verbal accounts in more recent times.

39. Heritage assets will vary in how much they can contribute to our understanding of our history and in the vulnerability of the potential for new knowledge. Any activity that impairs the prospects of a future archaeological investigation harms the research value of a heritage asset. This can mean that some assets, or parts of them, are very sensitive to change. Expert advice will often be needed to identify those sensitivities and to assess how they can be worked around or how harm may be minimised.
40. Potential for research may exist in buildings and landscapes (whether designed or not), as well as buried archaeological sites. Previous decorative schemes within buildings may be concealed by later wallpaper, for example, whilst analysis of the pollen preserved in ponds or canal features may reveal a record of species planted in a historic garden. The quality of the anticipated evidence may be diminished not only by removal of fabric or deposits, but also by, for example, geochemical or hydrological changes – resulting in dewatering of waterlogged deposits.
41. If an asset has archaeological potential, carefully targeted research to understand that potential can help inform subsequent decisions about managing change to that asset. Non-intrusive investigation is preferable to intrusive work, with the latter only normally being justified where the public benefits, which include the enhanced understanding delivered, clearly outweigh the damage caused.

## Architectural and Artistic Interest

42. Architectural and artistic interests derive from a contemporary appreciation of the asset's aesthetics. Architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is derived from the use of human imagination and skill to convey meaning through all forms of creative expression. This might include the use, representation or influence of historic places or buildings in artworks (contributing to their significance through their association with art), as well as the meaning, skill and emotional impact of works of art within our environment that are either part of heritage assets or assets in their own right. There is often an overlap between architectural and artistic interest. However, when making decisions about conservation it can be useful to draw a distinction between design created through detailed instructions (such as architectural drawings) and the direct creation of a work of art by a designer who is also in significant part the craftsman (such as a sculptor).
43. The sensory and intellectual stimulation we derive from a heritage asset dictates its aesthetic value, which can be the result of conscious design, including artistic endeavour or technical innovation, or the seemingly fortuitous outcome of the way in which a place has evolved and been used over time. Many places combine these two aspects – for example, where the qualities of an already attractive landscape

have been reinforced by human embellishment – while others may have inspired awe or fear (such as ‘sublime’ landscapes of the Lake District).

44. The design of an asset imparts aesthetic qualities through its composition, decoration or detailing, and craftsmanship. As a result, the materials or planting used, and the form, proportions, massing silhouette, views and vistas and circulation created can all affect how the architectural interest is experienced and valued. Equally, points of access, corridors and pathways, the arrangement of spaces and plan form, sources of heat, light and power may all contribute to the architectural interest.
45. Architectural interest may extend to an intellectual idea governing the design (for example, a building’s form that expresses the Holy Trinity), and the choice or influence of sources from which it was derived. It may be attributed to a known patron, architect, designer, landscape gardener or craftsman, or be a mature product of a vernacular tradition of building or land management and so has historic interest as well. In each case the design of the building or structure as it survives has value for illustrating the ideas and influences of people in the past and forms a tangible connection with them.
46. Architectural interest can extend beyond factors directly in the control of the architect. For example, the seemingly organic form of an urban or rural landscape; the relationship of vernacular buildings and structures and their materials to their use and setting; or a harmonious, expressive or dramatic quality in the juxtaposition of vernacular or industrial buildings and spaces.
47. The architectural or artistic merit of buildings or sites displaying technological innovation or virtuosity may not be immediately obvious to the non-expert observer but its aesthetic interest derives from its design and such attributes are grouped under this heading.
48. The action of nature on human works, particularly the often-perceived enhancement of the appearance of a heritage asset by the passage of time (‘the patina of age’), may overlie the conscious design and influence how we feel and respond to an asset. It may simply add to the range and depth of our valuing, and thus the significance of the asset; or on occasion it may be in conflict possibly representing a threat to that asset and its significance, for example, when physical damage is caused by vegetation charmingly rooting in masonry.
49. Sustaining architectural interest tends to depend on appropriate stewardship to maintain the integrity of a designed concept, be it landscape, architecture, or structure. While aesthetic values may be related to the age of a place, they may also be amenable to restoration and enhancement. Artistic interest, however, is more reliant on the integrity of work which remains the actual product of the artist’s hand, and is more vulnerable to over-restoration: a minimum of intervention will more often be preferable. The aesthetic and design values of the artwork will be proportionate to the extent that it remains.

# CHAPTER 3: APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES

50. The Conservation Principles will inform a wide range of decisions in the management of the historic environment. This chapter sets the context for decision-making in research and designation, before focusing in particular on decisions about managing change.

## **Research and making information accessible**

51. Since understanding is the starting point for effective conservation (see above – Principle 3), research plays a vital part in informing a range of decisions that relate to the sustainable management of the historic environment. Most designation activity will incorporate some research, which has the potential to reveal new evidence about an asset. Research is often required to inform decisions about the management of change (particularly in relation to significance - see para 65). Research may also be carried out to advance our understanding and enjoyment of the historic environment without an immediate driver of designation or informing an immediate proposal for change.
52. Historic Environment Records play a vital role in developing a comprehensive and dynamic digital information resource, both for understanding particular places and as a wider research tool; other repositories of digital information, such as OASIS (the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological investigationS) and Historic England's 'Pastscape', also have an important part to play. Physical source materials, for instance in county record offices, libraries, museums and collections, are fundamentally important resources for researchers. Key elements of documentation generated through understanding and making changes to an asset, should be copied to the relevant local Historic Environment Record, as well as remaining accessible to everyone directly concerned with the asset (see above – Principle 6).

## **Designation**

53. Listing (or 'designation') of specific parts of our environment helps us appreciate and protect those areas by recognising that they have special significance (Principle 3). Almost everywhere is valued by someone; designation helps us identify our more important heritage assets, but it does not follow that something that is not designated has no significance.
54. Where the significance of a heritage asset is judged to be 'special' or 'nationally important' – that is above a defined threshold – it may be designated via one of the statutory or national regimes. For example, historic, architectural and group value

criteria are used to determine if a building passes the threshold to be put on the National Heritage List for England as a listed building, and thus be recognised to be of 'special interest' by the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport; the threshold for battlefields and parks and gardens to be put on the register is special historic interest.

55. Historic England aims to guide decisions about the day-to-day management of an asset that take account of all the interests that contribute to its significance, and not just those which reach the threshold for formal designation'.
56. Heritage designations can also be made at a local level. Conservation Areas are designated for special architectural and historic interest. Most are designated by the Council as the Local Planning Authority, governed by legislation and informed by detailed advice produced by Historic England.
57. Local lists established by local planning authorities play an essential role in building and reinforcing a sense of local character and distinctiveness in the historic environment. Local lists can be used to identify heritage assets that are locally significant to support the development of local planning policy.
58. There are other designations that are not heritage-specific but can be used to protect heritage assets. These include Local Green Spaces, Assets of Community Value, Tree Preservation Orders, playing fields, ancient woodland, Green Belt, World Heritage Sites, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

### **Managing change in the planning system**

59. Conservation is about managing change to a heritage asset and its setting in ways that will best sustain its significance (Principle 4), while taking opportunities to better reveal or enhance that significance for present and future generations. This largely takes place within the planning system, for example, Listed Building Consent, Listed Building Heritage Partnership Agreements and Listed Building Consent Orders (see Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013). Conservation objectives are also met in areas where activity does not need any formal consent in relation to heritage such as most recommendations in Management Plans.
60. Making decisions about change to a heritage asset is a key part of conservation, but also critical to the long-term outcome is the maintenance regime and, where the asset is capable of active use, finding uses that are sympathetic to its significance and supportive of its maintenance.
61. This section covers the full range of changes that an owner may wish to carry out: from minor repair or land management, through works requiring formal permission of some kind and including complete removal of the asset.
62. Conservation may simply involve trying to maintain the status quo, intervening only as necessary to counter the effects of vegetation growth and physical decay,

including by the action of the sea, or it may require positive action and more major change. As well as being potentially harmful, change can be neutral or beneficial in its effect on heritage assets; it is only harmful if (and to the extent that) the asset's significance is reduced.

63. If changes to an asset respect its significance, then in most cases they are likely to serve both the public interest of its conservation and the private interests of those who use it. Many places now valued as part of the historic environment exist because of past patronage and investment, and the work of successive generations often contributes to their significance. Owners and managers of heritage assets ought not to be discouraged from adding further layers that are judged to be of a quality that could add future interest, provided that the current significance is not materially reduced in the process.
64. Decisions about change to heritage assets may be influenced by a range of factors. They may involve balancing existing heritage interests against the predicted benefits and disbenefits of the proposed intervention. The public benefit from heritage conservation needs to be reconciled with other, usually inter-related, impacts in economic, social and environmental terms. There is rarely a single right answer, so adequate information and adopting a rigorous process is crucial to reaching transparent, publicly-justifiable decisions.
65. Where change to a heritage asset is being proposed, it is important to identify in sufficient detail the significance of the asset (in accordance with the steps outlined in paragraph 14, above), and what impact the change will have on it. Factors to consider in assessing the impact of change include:
  - the relative contribution to significance of the elements affected (where appropriate, by reference to criteria for national or local designation), including the contribution of its setting;
  - how the proposed change would affect these elements;
  - the extent of any uncertainty about its interests (particularly in relation to potential for hidden or buried elements); and
  - any tensions between potentially conflicting interests, if possible agreed by all who have an interest in the asset.
66. Judgements that a heritage asset passes the threshold for designation are necessarily cautious and normally stand the test of time. We can reasonably expect that a designated heritage asset will be of importance to society for generations to come. However, the significance of a heritage asset tends to extend beyond that which justifies designation, and to vary over time. A good assessment of significance will be an informed and inclusive judgement made on a particular body of information, applying prevailing perceptions of what we value about the asset (its heritage interest) primarily to inform the management of a heritage asset at the time

the decision is to be made. Any such assessment will therefore need periodic review in the light of new information and evolving perceptions.

67. Ideally, proposed changes will cause no harm to the significance of the heritage asset and the right decision will be obvious. In practice, however, there tend to be options for achieving the objective of proposed change, each of which will have different impacts. The options (including taking no action) can usefully be assessed in terms of their impacts on significance. In other words, the decision will be informed by the predicted long-term or permanent consequences of proposals, in terms of degree and whether their impact is positive, negative or neutral on each of the identified heritage interests (noting that the cumulative impact of a number of broadly neutral changes may be negative).
68. The approach can be refined by weighting different heritage interests to reflect their relative importance for the place and its significance. The assessment can be particularly useful if applied at the conceptual stage of a proposal, and refined at each successive step towards making a decision until the optimum solution is attained, minimising harm while still achieving the desired purpose.
69. Even the optimum solution may cause harm to the significance of a heritage asset. The best use for a significant place – its ‘optimum viable use’ – is one that is both capable of sustaining the place and avoids or minimises harm to its significance. It is not necessarily the most profitable use if that would entail greater harm than other viable uses. When considering the loss of the public benefits provided by a heritage asset it is important to consider that these would normally be expected to be long-lived, delivered to this and future generations, where other public benefits, though valuable, may not be able to claim these lasting characteristics.
70. Consistent and transparent decisions help to maintain confidence in the system that has been put in place to strive for sustainable development. Working through the steps described here (and in paragraph 14) – and, where the decision is taken within the planning system, complying with relevant legislation, policy and guidance – will deliver both reasonable decision-making and consistency in approach, although every case must be considered on its own merits so that similar-looking cases may still result in different decisions (Principle 5).
71. Proper record-keeping allows periodic reviews of the effect of decisions and consequent learning. Sometimes the records of previous repairs have revealed the cause of deterioration today, or have shown which repair methods have worked well. Periodic reviews of the effect of decisions over time or across a class of heritage asset will provide evidence for sound policy-making and can lead to better decisions (Principle 6).

## GLOSSARY

<b>Alteration</b>	Work resulting in a change to the function or appearance of a place
<b>Archaeological Interest</b>	There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them (NPPF)
<b>Architectural Interest</b>	The properties of a place resulting from and revealing the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types
<b>Artistic Interest</b>	The influence of human imagination and skill to convey meaning through all forms of creative expression on the physical properties of a place and its setting or on their associations and appreciation. Artistic interest may relate to the influence of a place on art as well as the use of skill and design embodied in its fabric
<b>Authenticity</b>	Those characteristics that most truthfully reflect and embody the cultural heritage values of a place (This definition is based on The Nara Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS 1994))
<b>Conservation</b>	The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance (NPPF)
<b>Conservation Area</b>	‘An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’, designated under what is now s69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
<b>Context</b>	Any relationship between a place and other places, relevant to the values of that place
<b>Designation</b>	The recognition of particular heritage value(s) of a significant place by giving it formal status under law or policy intended to sustain those values
<b>Designated Heritage Asset</b>	A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation (NPPF)

<b>Fabric</b>	The material substance of which places are formed, including geology, archaeological deposits, structures and buildings, construction materials, decorative details and finishes and planted or managed flora
<b>Harm</b>	Change for the worse, here primarily referring to the effect of inappropriate interventions on the heritage interest of a place that reduces their values to society
<b>Heritage</b>	All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility
<b>Heritage, Cultural</b>	Inherited assets which people identify and value as a reflection and expression of their evolving knowledge, beliefs and traditions, and of their understanding of the beliefs and traditions of others
<b>Heritage, Natural</b>	Inherited habitats, species, ecosystems, geology and landforms, including those in and under water, to which people attach value
<b>Heritage Asset</b>	A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing) (NPPF)
<b>Historic Environment</b>	All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible or buried, and deliberately planted or managed flora (NPPF)
<b>Historic Environment Record</b>	Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use (NPPF)
<b>Historic Interest</b>	The connections between a place and past lives and events
<b>Instrumental Benefits</b>	The ways in which places are able to deliver beneficial contributions to public life – the significance of a heritage asset should provide means to deliver benefits beyond its physical utility, sometimes referred to as their non-use values
<b>Integrity</b>	A measure of the wholeness and intactness of a heritage asset and the survival and condition of those elements that

contribute to their significance

<b>Intervention</b>	Any action which has a physical effect on the fabric or appreciation of a place
<b>Maintenance</b>	Routine work regularly necessary to keep the fabric of a place in good order
<b>Material (Consideration)</b>	Relevant to and having a substantial effect on, demanding consideration, e.g. "the effect of a proposal on the significance of a heritage asset is a material consideration in planning decisions"
<b>Natural Change</b>	Change which takes place in the historic environment without human intervention, which may require specific management responses (particularly maintenance or periodic renewal) in order to sustain the significance of a place
<b>Object</b>	Anything not (now) fixed to or incorporated within the structure of a place, but historically associated with it
<b>Place</b>	Any part of the historic environment, of any scale, that has a distinctive identity perceived by people
<b>Preserve</b>	To keep safe from harm (The legal interpretation established in <i>South Lakeland DC v Secretary of State for the Environment and Rowbotham</i> [1991] 2 L.P.R. 97)
<b>Proportionality</b>	The quality of being appropriately related to something else in size, degree, or other measurable characteristics
<b>Public</b>	Of, concerning, done, acting, etc. for people as a whole
<b>Renewal</b>	Comprehensive dismantling and replacement of an element of a place, in the case of structures normally reincorporating sound units
<b>Repair</b>	Work beyond the scope of maintenance, to remedy defects caused by decay, damage or use, including minor adaptation to achieve a sustainable outcome, but not involving restoration or alteration
<b>Restoration</b>	To return a place to a known earlier state, on the basis of compelling evidence, without conjecture
<b>Reversible</b>	Capable of being reversed so that the previous state is restored
<b>Setting of a heritage asset</b>	The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or

may be neutral (NPPF)

<b>Significance [of a place/heritage asset]</b>	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 (NPPF)
<b>Significant Place</b>	A place which has heritage significance
<b>Sustain</b>	Maintain, nurture and affirm validity
<b>Sustainable</b>	Capable of meeting present needs without compromising ability to meet future needs
<b>Value</b>	An aspect of worth or importance, here attached by people to qualities of places
<b>Value, Aesthetic</b>	Value deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place
<b>Value, Communal</b>	Value deriving from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory
<b>Value, Evidential</b>	Value deriving from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity
<b>Value, Historical</b>	Value deriving from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present
<b>Value-based Judgement</b>	An assessment that reflects the values of the person or group making the assessment

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**The full list of Historic England advice is available online here:**

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