

New Ways of Working

The prospect of a modernised protection system is encouraging heritage professionals to transform their own working methods.

Principles of selection

Just what is it that makes a building, a site, a garden or a battlefield special enough to warrant designation? Statutory protection depends on a shared appreciation that aspects of our historic environment deserve an extra level of vigilance. Public enjoyment of the past has never been greater than it is today. This presents English Heritage and the DCMS with an opportunity to communicate better with the present-day guardians of historic places, and share our understanding as to why their property merits inclusion on the lists, schedules and registers that comprise our present designation approaches. A DCMS consultation, *Revisions to Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings: Planning Policy Guidance Note 15*, took place last year.

Owners and occupants alike of designated buildings and sites deserve to be treated with respect. Openness of process has been one of the central tenets of the HPR throughout. The arbitrary imposition of legal restrictions on the freedom to enjoy one's property at will is one thing; the highlighting of solid claims to historical or architectural notice, and its consequences, is quite another. Modern governance demands that the reasons for decisions and restrictions are fully explained, and made against published criteria. So the preparation of new principles of selection has formed an important strand of work for the Heritage Protection Department.

English Heritage takes pride in its research achievements, but it must be acknowledged that our energies have been applied unevenly across the full range of archaeological and historic features. In terms of setting out its stall, archaeology has led the way. Scheduling imposes very precise restrictions on designated archaeological sites, so it was important to communicate the importance of a site to the owner in order to establish a good working relationship and encourage positive management from the outset.

Essays on various aspects of the archaeological resource were commissioned from recognised

academic authorities. Named 'monument class descriptions', these have long been publicly available and go a long way towards explaining the claims to importance that a scheduled site possessed. In more recent years 'step reports' on different facets of industrial archaeology – from stone quarrying to the chemicals industry – set out current understanding in some considerable detail. This detailed work builds a secure and enduring basis for designation decision-making. We are committed to continuing work on archaeological principles of selection, and aligning them with other designated elements of the historic environment.

Where more clarity is required as a matter of urgency is in the realm of listing. Around 380,000 existing list entries cover approximately half a million buildings and items: but the formal published guidance on selection is confined to a few paragraphs in *Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG 15)*.

English Heritage's *Understanding Listing* booklets of the mid-1990s, on subjects as diverse as East Anglian farms, pubs and Manchester mills, constituted the first sustained effort to communicate our appreciation and designation of certain building types. What is now needed is coverage of the whole range of buildings and structures. This work is now in hand, informed by the findings of the 2005 public consultation. This will assist not only with the determining of new requests for designation, but will endow the huge body of existing listings with a fresh note of contextual understanding. This will assist all parties – owners, architects, managers, local authorities as well as designators – in the positive management of these very special places.

Our approach has been to supplement the overarching principles enshrined in *PPG 15* with two levels of supporting guidance. We have created 21 separate building-type categories, from agricultural to the utilities (see box opposite). The vast subject of housing has been broken down into five separate areas. Within each category, we have created outline



© English Heritage

A comprehensive series of English Heritage 'selection guides' will in future help to de-mystify the process through which historic buildings and places are designated.

principles of selection, which offer the essential guide to the particular qualities we look for in assessing candidates for designation; beneath these are longer supporting essays, termed 'selection guides', in which we provide an outline of the historical development of each type, and some expanded consideration of designation issues. Aspects such as design quality, decoration, plan form, rarity, technological interest, historical associations, materials, intactness and others can all be discussed, thereby demystifying much of the designation process. We are also aware that we will need to keep abreast of ever-changing understanding and perceptions and make sure that the lists remain fit for purpose.

We can then amplify our coverage of certain key areas through supporting publications that follow on from the *Understanding Listing* booklets. Topical themes such as schools, libraries, farm buildings and shops all suggest themselves as priorities. Electronic publication makes the dissemination and updating of such material ever more attainable.

Thanks to the vital assistance of colleagues in the Research and Standards Group, the selection guides for buildings are now in hand. The exercise has two important benefits. Not only will it usher in much greater openness to the proceedings, it also speeds up our designation work. Principles of selection are thus crucial to the vital matter of identifying what requires special care during the planning process.

Roger Bowdler

Heritage Protection Department, English Heritage

Listed Building Types

Agriculture	Domestic 5: vernacular
Buildings in Gardens, Parks and Urban Spaces	Education
Commemorative	Health and Welfare
Commercial	Industrial
Communications	Law and Government
Culture and Entertainment	Maritime and Naval
Domestic 1: country house	Military
Domestic 2: suburban	Places of Worship
Domestic 3: town and terraced houses	Sport and Recreational Buildings
Domestic 4: 20th century	Transport
	Utilities

when heritage protection reform is implemented. This will involve developing the necessary standards and benchmarks, developing the content and ensuring interoperability with other local authority systems, initially those in use in the planning departments but in time spreading throughout the authorities. Colleagues are working on a separate initiative, the Heritage Gateway, which will provide a structure that links the national with regional and local statutory and non-statutory records to provide comprehensive coverage while at the same time enabling the thematic cross-searching of many local authority data sets.

In parallel with the technical development, the working party has been looking at the changes that will need to be accommodated by the individuals using and contributing to the system. This work includes developing models for different delivery structures. In the process it will be necessary to examine models that would merge the existing provision into regional data providers, or even a single national one. At the same time, other models would see the existing structures further subdivided and the overall number of systems increase. This situation reflects the tensions between the economies of scale brought about by merger and the counterbalancing problems associated with distance between the local authority heritage adviser and the record – and all of this overlain by the possibilities of further local government reform.

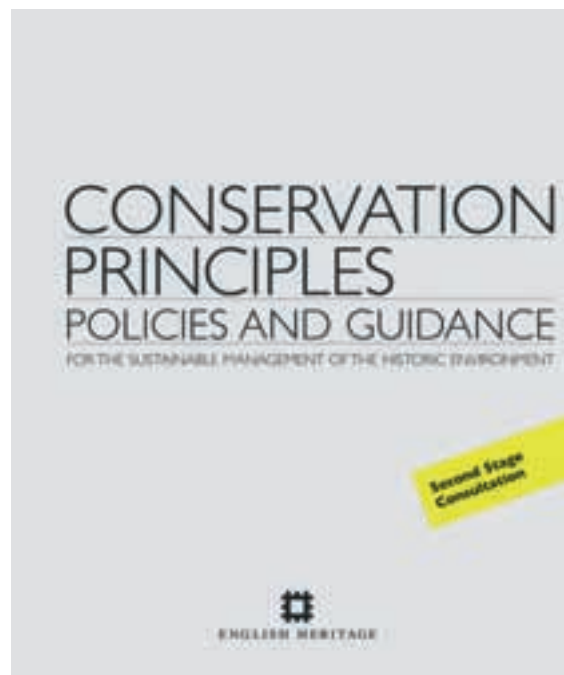
Dave Batchelor

Head of Local Authority Liaison, English Heritage

English Heritage's Conservation Principles

Delivering English Heritage's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* forms a vital leg of our three-pronged approach to what we have termed 'constructive conservation'. The other two legs are the establishment with government of heritage protection reforms fit for the 21st century, and building capacity and competency across the heritage sector. The *Conservation Principles* are designed to spell out in one place, in a comprehensive fashion, the fundamental beliefs and policies that should underpin our own standards of practice in the broad field of conservation.

The need for a conservation policy and statement of principles goes to the core of our business and our plan to exert leadership and provide consistency and transparency in all we do. These objectives are now enshrined as a key plank of the English Heritage Strategy 2005–2010, *Making the Past Part of Our Future*,



Design: The Holmes Wood Consultancy

which aims to help people develop their understanding of the historic environment, to value it, to care for it, and to enjoy it, both now and in the future. We intend to enable and promote sustainable change to the historic environment and help local communities to care for England's familiar and cherished places.

In February this year, we issued an initial brief consultation on the headline *Conservation Principles* as a range-finding exercise to draw out some of the key issues we ought to address in more detail in the consolidated document. We are particularly grateful for the number of responses to this initial exercise and for the depth of thought they represented. As a result, we have refined the wording of the *Principles* themselves in the light of widespread support for their scope and general direction. In addition, we have also refined the draft *Policies and Guidance* that underpin them by taking into account many helpful suggestions on scope and detail.

The resultant consolidated draft will be issued for a formal, full-length consultation lasting 12 weeks, and readers have the opportunity to review our current work and make further comments.

Copies of the consultation document will be found at www.english-heritage.org.uk/conservationprinciples. Replies to this second stage can also be sent to us as an annotated copy of our document, by letter addressed to Sally Embree, Conservation Principles, Conservation Department, English Heritage, 1 Waterhouse Square, 138–142 Holborn, London EC1N 2ST; or e-mail us at: conservationprinciples@english-heritage.org.uk.

Our intention then is similarly to revise the new draft in the light of written comments received and those provided at our regional focus group meetings, and to publish a final illustrated version in 2007.

Sally Embree

Conservation Department, English Heritage

Stewardship of the historic environment: negotiating principles and practice

Since 2003, the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA), the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO) have felt the need for a suite of common guidance for practitioners, embracing all aspects of the historic environment in all four countries of the United Kingdom and covering the full range of conservation tasks. Initial scoping of a project in 2004 envisaged building on the model of 'Standard and Guidance' documents developed by the IFA from the mid-1990s.

It was recognised early on that any work on developing such a standard would need to be all-embracing, covering best practice across the archaeological, historic building and landscape communities in the public and private sectors. A commonly agreed framework would be much more useful than simply quality assurance. The IHBC, IFA and ALGAO view it as a matter of central importance to strengthening partnership across professional groupings and to harmonising approaches to key professional issues such as accreditation and regulation. The title of 'Stewardship' was chosen – understanding and caring for inherited historic assets on behalf of present and future generations, a broad concept that is capable of extension from the ethical behaviours of professional and voluntary practitioners, to those of owners and managers.

In parallel with the first stages of the development process for the Stewardship standard and guidance, English Heritage commissioned

separate research for its own English *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*. The affinities between the two projects, with their separate purposes, were immediately striking. But despite the potential for overlap, there has been a constructive articulation between the two processes and sufficient dialogue to ensure that they are complementary, sharing common vocabularies where appropriate, and distinct in approach where necessary.

As the Stewardship project has matured, the initial model for a Standard and Guidance has progressively evolved. The first concept was of a high-level standard applicable to all roles and activities that would overarch two more specific standards for 'curatorial' activities, one for the archaeological aspects of the historic environment and the other for the historic built environment. It is a measure of the extent to which thinking in the sector has moved forward, that the lead bodies and their Advisory Panel have now abandoned this model in favour of a single, integrated framework for best practice.

The notion of a fixed standard with measurable outcomes has also been reviewed and at the time of writing is now structured as simple Guiding Principles informed by key concepts and supporting detailed guidance. The next steps in refining and testing this framework will be through national and regional working groups, who will peer review drafts in a series of workshops. The crucial question for all the many interest groups in the historic environment sector is whether the generalities of the Guidance document work adequately for their particular situations. What emerges from this stage may look rather different again but, as the shape of a modernised heritage protection system continues to evolve, it is right that this guidance for the next generation of stewardship engages dynamically with that process.

Gill Chitty, Head of Conservation, Council for British Archaeology

David Baker OBE