

The Unified Designation Base and Register of Historic Sites and Buildings for England

A single integrated register will be the foundation of the reformed system for protecting England's historic environment.

REFORMING THE SYSTEM

The most significant innovation of the reformed system is the creation of a new kind of unified designation that brings together the former scheduling, listing and registration regimes. For the first time, it will attempt to enshrine in legislation and process the recognition that the historic environment is often a complex entity, composed of several complementary parts. For that reason, its significance and effective management may be obscured or diminished if it is fragmented among disparate designation and control regimes.

This fundamental concept sits at the heart of the reformed system and gives rise to its key features:

- the RHSBE will be the place where complementary historic assets are brought together under one register entry, and their complex interrelationships and relative significances flagged with clarity;
- a new system of heritage consent will arise directly from such unified designations;
- 'joined-up' management of historic assets through HPA is a very practical manifestation of the unifying principle.

The new Heritage Consent and Heritage Partnership Agreements are discussed in the articles that follow, while here we look in more detail at the unified system and the Register itself.

A wide-ranging series of pilot projects and case studies has allowed English Heritage to test, on a variety of complex sites, approaches to unified designation which come as close to the integrated assessment and management of these sites as can be achieved under the current

system, particularly where multiple assets of different types are grouped together. The case studies in this edition of *Conservation Bulletin* demonstrate how these new approaches have been effective in improving the understanding of complex historic entities and facilitating their management.

The unified designation base

The new approach will allow historic assets to be identified more flexibly and comprehensively, and their significance more clearly assessed. Even the apparently most straightforward asset – a single building, say – may have associated land or structures which contribute to its significance, but which have only limited recognition, or contested protection under the current system. Sometimes a group of assets are better identified and understood together – for instance a traditional farmstead, or a group of related industrial buildings, or the remains of processes such as those at the early steelworks at Darnall, Sheffield. The merits of a unified approach are particularly clear for those very complex sites in which multiple designations are currently adjacent or overlapping. These might perhaps involve a group of listed structures in a registered setting, and underlain by scheduled remains – as in the case of the Museum Gardens and St Mary's Abbey Precinct in York. The inconsistencies, complexities and frustrations that may all too easily arise in the assessment and management of such complex areas can be removed in a system that allows for their holistic and integrated identification.

Mapping will have a particularly important part to play in ensuring clarity. Its use to define the extent of the registered site, to set out the

boundaries of individual assets and to identify areas of differing character and significance, has been successfully rolled out in the pilot projects. At the point of designation, mapping will also have the extremely significant role of signalling the appropriate regulatory regime to be applied to the various component parts of the site.

The Register

The Register will comprise two parts:

- a 'main section', compiled by English Heritage, that includes nationally significant heritage assets, incorporating all existing listed, scheduled and registered assets (parks and gardens and battlefields), with the addition of World Heritage Sites;
- a 'local section', compiled by local authorities, that includes conservation areas and other local designations such as local lists.

For the main section, multiple related assets will be grouped together under a Register Entry 'wrapper' that explains the context of the entire site and allows a holistic description of its importance. For the first time important inter-relationships will be made statutorily explicit.

Sitting below the wrapper would be a series of Historic Asset Records (HARs) that would set out the details of the component assets of the larger entity. Non-complex entities – the majority – will be entered on the Register as a simple HAR, with no overarching wrapper. Every HAR will be fronted by a Summary of Importance that sets out explicitly, clearly and briefly what it is that makes the building or site worthy of designation. English Heritage already employs Summaries of Importance for new designations under the current system; their huge benefits in clarifying and simplifying the designation process should brook no delay. Feedback so far has indicated that the increased openness and clarity is appreciated, as is the sharper definition of what is and is not designated.

Most consideration so far has been given to the development of the main section of the Register – the forthcoming heritage White Paper will need to offer more detail on local designation. The local section of the Register, compiled by local authorities against criteria and guidance prepared nationally by English Heritage, will present an opportunity to iron out some of the inconsistencies seen in current designation and management practice through England as a whole, and to raise standards overall. It may also allow local designations to benefit from the greater integration, clarity and flexibility of the reformed system as a whole.

The driving force behind the new system of

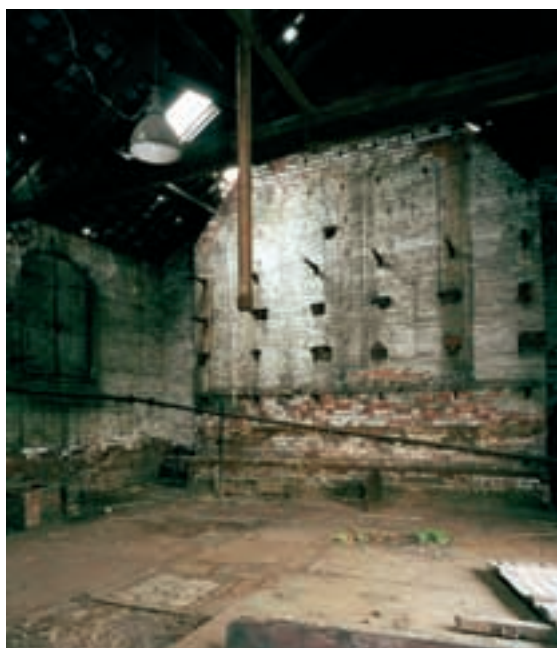
heritage protection is a determination to provide increased openness and clarity. The new Register, in both its local and national sections, will be a prime agent in achieving this. It will be a first point of contact, it will be easily accessible, it will set out comprehensively what is designated and why, and it will explain clearly the regulation and management mechanism attached to the registered asset.

Further work

While we have made significant progress on the format and processes surrounding the new Register, there is substantial work still to be done. The question of how we review and transfer existing designations into the new Register is a key issue. How the new designation base triggers subsequent control mechanisms also needs careful development. At English Heritage we are now working with our partners to determine how best to present information for owners and also how our own data can be effectively shared with others such as the National Monuments Record and local HER systems.

This work has involved staff from across English Heritage, local authorities, owners and managers and amenity groups; partnership is a vital element both in developing the new process, and in its subsequent operation. All who have worked and commented on the development of the unified system have contributed strongly to our progress to date on this linchpin of reform.

Sarah Buckingham and Paul Jeffrey
Heritage Protection Department, English Heritage



Darnall Works, Sheffield. An internal view of the Grade II* crucible workshop – just one of the numerous designated but sadly neglected structures that make up this complex and historically important 19th-century industrial site.

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Arnos Vale cemetery

The HPR is premised upon an integrated approach to the historic environment. We have a singularly rich inheritance to champion: from prehistoric sites to Cold War aerodromes; from architectural masterpieces to much-loved communities. Just how we divide up the myriad places that deserve statutory designation is one of the questions asked by the review. At Arnos Vale cemetery, we set out to find out whether our approach to historic landscapes was the right one.

Arnos Vale is one of the best known of early Victorian cemeteries. Opened in 1840, it consists of a steeply sided dell set on the eastern edge of Bristol. An existing garden was taken over by the commercial promoters of the cemetery, and elegant Greek Revival chapels and lodges were built (to the designs of Charles Underwood). Elaborate private monuments soon followed. The result was an elegiac landscape, in which planting, landscaping, architecture, sculpture and inscriptions all combine to create an atmosphere of emotional tenderness and religious devotion. As the tombs grew in number so this atmosphere grew in intensity. The mercantile might of Bristol found its funereal expression in Arnos Vale, and the memorials testify to family pride and to social ambition. It easily stands comparison with the great London cemeteries such as Highgate and Abney Park.

In recent years, however, the cemetery has fallen on hard times. Dwindling reserves and rising maintenance obligations make private

cemeteries like Arnos Vale difficult places to run. The crematorium installed here in the 1920s provided some profit, but when this facility lost its licence the owner, responsible for the safety of visitors, closed the cemetery altogether. Locals felt excluded from a vital green space; mourners and relatives felt shut out; Bristolians and visitors from beyond likewise felt deprived of an asset of national importance.

Statutory designation is intended to safeguard the survival of places of special interest: at places like Arnos Vale, one senses all too clearly the reasons for our widely admired systems of heritage protection. They formed the justification for the compulsory purchase order that was subsequently served by Bristol City Council. A trust was established to take over the running of the place, backed up by a highly motivated friends organisation.

Our mission was to check whether the designations we already had were fit for purpose. The relevant designation regimes here were listing and the Register of Parks and Gardens. Were they integrated sufficiently? Did they do the job of celebrating special interest well enough?

Listing had been done in two phases: as part of the Bristol re-survey, and subsequently as a spot-listing trawl that picked up a number of omissions (inevitable, given the overgrown nature of the place and the sheer density of the memorials, estimated at some 40,000 in number). The HPR pilot study undertook a whirlwind review of the tombs, and concluded

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Arnos Vale cemetery, Bristol. An elegiac landscape where the overall significance transcends the sum of its individual landscaping, architectural and sculptural components.

that the right ones had been selected for designation. The Register of Parks and Gardens entry was fairly recent, and certainly stood up to scrutiny. A management plan by Nicholas Pearson Associates helped greatly, too.

And yet something was missing: the separate approaches failed to give an overall sense of the totality of the place. The landscape entry studiously avoided mentioning monuments, while the list entries scrupulously avoided all mention of setting and context. Not that this is to be wondered at: designations have hitherto been kept very separate, each with their own distinct mission. And yet one cannot but feel that a major opportunity exists to do things better.

Designation should identify special features, and shed light on their claims to special attention. This could be architectural, or sculptural, or historical: list descriptions are replaced with HARs, which serve as the prompts to shared understanding and have conservation and educational uses. Some might think it invidious to single out memorials for special attention, rather than the totality, but some tombs will always warrant a more bespoke approach to their care, and designation can help identify priorities for repair work and interpretation. The landscape is treated as an element in its own right, but more care is taken to connect the tombs with their setting, and vice versa. And all the individual elements are now placed within a Register Entry, which owes much to the Register of Parks and Gardens

entry for its contextual approach.

One of the more important conclusions to be drawn from this pilot project is that the designatory basis that listing and the Register provide is essentially sound, but that approaches need to be brought together if true significance is to be flagged and specialness celebrated. The prospect of a unified Register of Historic Sites and Buildings of England enables these aspirations to be met.

Roger Bowdler

Heritage Protection Department, English Heritage

Rochester Cathedral and Precinct: an ecclesiastical pilot project in north Kent

The Rochester pilot project examines how the HPR might impact on the Church of England's management of its estate in a cathedral-close environment. It aims to test new methods of assigning significance to some of our nation's most precious assets. Collaboration with project partners, including the Dean and Chapter, the Cathedral Fabric Commission and Medway Council, has been a key factor in the design of a useful and usable new system that could bring real benefits to future management of the cathedral and precinct.

Rochester, on the banks of the River Medway in north Kent, has a long and significant history as both a cathedral city and port. It is the second oldest episcopal see in the country



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The Grade II mid-18th to 19th-century former Diocesan Registry on the Bishop's Palace site, Rochester which incorporates part of the medieval precinct wall. The current list description makes no mention that the ground beneath it is of national importance.

The Bishops' Palace area, Rochester. The central building range incorporates material from the south range of the 15th-century palace. Note the fabric and blocked windows of the gabled end elevation.



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(after Canterbury), founded in AD 604, with the present cathedral dating from the 11th century. Although Rochester's precinct is partially protected by current legislation, with 26 listed buildings and 3 scheduled monuments, there are also notable gaps, which include areas of nationally important archaeological remains that have no protection under the current system. In addition the existing documentation is poor. Scheduling descriptions are brief and do not provide an adequate understanding of the archaeological significance of the precinct. Some listed buildings had been assessed without the benefit of internal inspections and their descriptions are therefore incomplete and, in some cases, inaccurate. However, the existence of a Cathedral Conservation Plan (Keevill 2005) provided an invaluable springboard for fieldwork in late 2005.

The first stage of the project was to research and compile new-style designation documentation for the precinct area, the form of which had been devised by earlier pilot studies and was further developed at Rochester. In essence this removed divisions between current listed and scheduled assets, rightly blurring the boundaries between what was traditionally described as architectural or archaeological. An added advantage was the opportunity to study groups of buildings and monuments, an approach lacking in the current listing system, which greatly enhanced understanding of their interrelationships. Finally, the pilot provided the opportunity to raise the profile of the

archaeological significance of the cathedral and precinct.

The reassessment of the site of the palace of the bishops of Rochester, to the south-west of the cathedral, proved a valuable test-bed for the new-style documentation. The area has a long time depth from the early 3rd to the late 19th centuries and contains a range of nationally important historic assets. These include: the buried archaeological remains of the early 3rd-century Roman town defences and the 13th to 14th-century city wall; a mid-12th-century building, possibly an early bishops' house; buried and upstanding remains of the Bishops' Palace from about 1450; 16th to 19th-century domestic properties partly re-using earlier fabric; and the medieval precinct wall, which defines the western edge of the site. This area is partially designated in the form of three Grade II-listed structures, one Grade II* building and a scheduled monument. The latter extends only to one-third of the land parcel and the monument description does not even mention the presence of the palace! The current documentation does not provide an accurate understanding of the significance of the elements of the site, nor does it provide any concept of the development of the whole.

Our three main principles for the new-style document were that it should be accessible, and that it should explain the entire Bishops' Palace complex both spatially (horizontally and vertically) and temporally. This would enable the occupier of an individual property to

understand what was significant about their part of the site in architectural, archaeological and historical terms, as well as appreciating how their element was a part of a larger story about the history and development of the western precinct. It is also worth stressing that in place of five different listing and scheduling descriptions and maps, the pilot project proposed one HAR and one associated map for the whole Bishops' Palace area, significantly simplifying the paperwork for the Dean and Chapter and tenants.

Work is ongoing, and the partnerships, both at Rochester and with the Cathedral Fabric Commission, are developing. However, the pilot has already offered the chance to amalgamate archaeological, historical and architectural designation approaches, to review existing arrangements and to work collectively towards a system that makes integrated management more attainable.

Veronica Fiorato

Heritage Protection Department, English Heritage

REFERENCE

Keevill, 2005. *Rochester Conservation Plan, 2005. Parts 1 & 2.* Keevill Heritage Consultancy

What makes Centre Point special?

Centre Point stands at the intersection of Oxford Street, Charing Cross Road and Tottenham Court Road and is one of central London's most prominent landmarks. It was built in 1961–6 to the design of Richard Seifert and Partners, and was listed Grade II in 1995, when a proposal threatened to alter its appearance. The slender, slightly convex 33-storey tower is supported on distinctive 'wasp-waisted' pilotis clad in grey ceramic mosaic. Technically advanced, and sculpturally striking, the building marked a high point in the English high-rise. Centre Point is not just an office block, but was designed as a multi-use complex. An elegant, curtain-glazed first-floor link connects the tower to a lower block to the east, with ground-floor shops, a bank at the north end and a pub at the south, two tiers of offices and six storeys of maisonettes above. To the front of the tower is a pool with concrete fountains. All form part of the listed building and are therefore subject to listed building control.

Centre Point was selected as a pilot project because it exemplifies some of the key issues which heritage protection reform seeks to address. Modern commercial buildings in multiple occupancy, as well as private flats, are almost constantly undergoing refurbishment and



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Centre Point tower at the heart of London's West End was built in 1961–6 to the design of Richard Seifert and Partners and is now a Grade II-listed building.

upgrading of services. If they are listed, this can mean significant numbers of applications for listed building consent for often routine works.

While the jury is still out on the quality of much 1960s commercial architecture, the accelerating pace of redevelopment, where proposals to demolish buildings less than 30 years old are now commonplace, dictates that we must be ahead of public taste if we are to preserve the very best products of this generation. The thorough reappraisal of the entire Centre Point complex has confirmed it not only as an exceptional and innovative piece of 1960s design, but also as a building with a distinct hierarchy where relative levels of significance can be readily identified and demarcated. The new HAR not only expands the existing list description, which concentrated on the external architecture, but seeks to communicate more clearly what is special about Centre Point and thus better informs the process of managing future change.

Centre Point is listed for its architectural interest and innovation. The tower, widely acclaimed as one of the finest high-rise compositions of the 1960s, was a deliberate departure from the smooth regularity of International Modernism towards a more inventive, sculptural approach, admired at the time and since for its confidence and originality. Not only is the tower itself of interest, but also its relationship with the link and rear block, each element being individually expressed to identify its discrete function. That said, we are also more explicit that the architectural quality of the ensemble



Centre Point,
The mezzanine
entrance lobby
with mosaic-clad
pilotis and
distinctive
paving.

diminishes at the rear block, which is patently standard '1960s commercial' (it was in fact conceived as part of a superseded scheme the tower of which had a very different elevational treatment). Its importance as a component of a planned ensemble, in terms of its scale, massing and relationship to the link and principal tower, is none the less fully recognised and should help inform future planning proposals.

Internally, the special interest lies principally within the public areas of the tower and link block. The original mezzanine entrance lobby, reached by an external stair, is the most impressive space. Here, the deeply tapering upper sections of the massive pilotis rise dramatically from white marble and black terrazzo paving. The interior of the link block is also impressive – on either side curtain-wall glazing is constructed of large sheets of 'armour' glass with central steel bosses, from which tapering glass fins project upwards to the ceiling. The overwhelming majority of the interiors, however, patently lack special interest, and this is made explicit in the HAR. The offices, always plain and functional, have been altered. The maisonettes, shops and pub have been refurbished many times and do not have features of note. The bank has been converted to a café and similarly has no original features of interest, apart from a mosaic decoration by Jupp Dernbach-Mayern.

The Centre Point pilot has been invaluable in evolving a more rigorous approach to how we assess significance in large modern, mixed-use sites, and how we communicate their claims to special interest. An HPA has been drafted, but changes of ownership and the issue of local authority resources have made us aware of the challenges that delivery of HPAs will sometimes bring. The designation lessons, however, are clear.

Delcia Keate

Heritage Protection Department, English Heritage

The Godolphin estate: a new framework for understanding and designating the historic environment

Godolphin House is one of Cornwall's most important houses, sited within a historic landscape that has developed over centuries. Here we have been able to explore new ways of approaching the interpretation and designation of historic assets.

The substantial mining wealth and the political power of the Godolphin family from the 14th century onwards led to the development of an estate to match the family's status. The house, with fabric dating back to the 15th century, stands within early formal gardens. The wider landscape includes a late 16th-century deer park, within which are the remains of prehistoric and medieval field systems, prehistoric enclosures, early tin mining and 16th-century rabbit warrening. There are also important tin- and copper-mining remains at Godolphin and Great Work Mines, which provided much of the family's early wealth.

The Godolphin estate was chosen as one of the pilot projects to test the application of the proposed heritage protection reforms because of its diverse range of assets. Under the present legislative system there are 20 listed buildings on the estate – four listed at Grade I – and much of the area is designated as a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. It also lies within the Tregonning and Gwinear districts, which are part of the Cornish mining area proposed for World Heritage status. Land to the west and south of Godolphin House is in an Environmental Stewardship scheme. Although there are presently no scheduled ancient monuments at Godolphin, an assessment report produced by Cornwall County Council in 1997 identified a number of nationally important archaeological remains. Additionally, research in the 1990s by English Heritage on the non-ferrous metals industries has resulted in recommendations for the statutory protection of most of the estate's mining remains.

The pilot project was set up in partnership with the National Trust, the Schofield family and Kerrier District Council. Fundamental to the project was an assessment of all aspects of the estate's historical development and importance – whether traditionally considered to be archaeology, historic buildings or designed landscape. The aim was to demonstrate the significance, and protect the integrity, of the whole historic landscape at Godolphin, if appropriate, rather than having the current artificial demarcation between individual listed, registered or nationally important archaeological remains. The pilot



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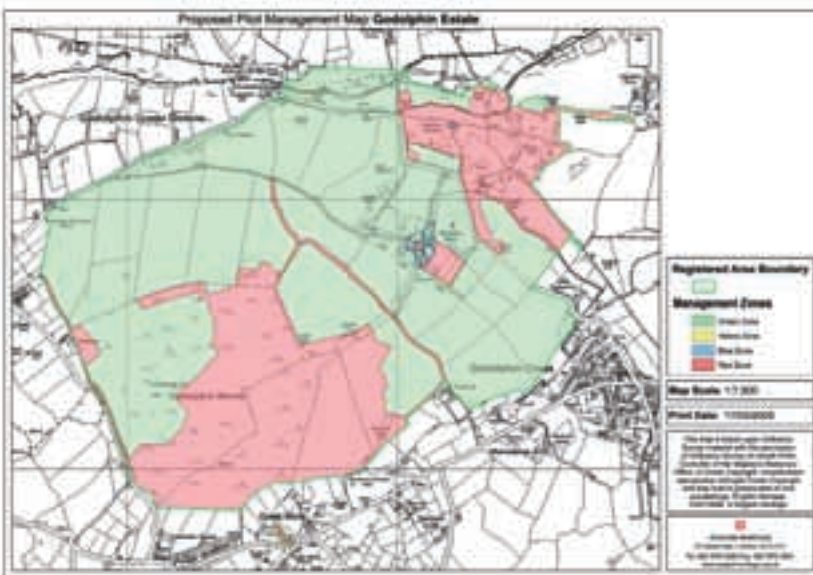
Godolphin House, one of Cornwall's most important houses. The magnificent early 17th-century colonnaded north front was a remarkably advanced architectural treatment for a relatively small country house.

work has effectively demonstrated that for complex sites where there are multiple designations that closely relate to each other, a two-tier approach to designation proves invaluable. This involves identifying and designating individual assets, or grouping those that are inter-related whether physically or historically, in HARs. These are accompanied by a single Register Entry, which provides an overarching description of the site and its significance, as a whole. In terms of the proposed new-style Register, Godolphin House, its associated forecourt structures, 16th-century stables and late 15th-century formal gardens can be gathered under a single HAR as a coherent group of spatially and historically related assets. Elsewhere on the estate, the standing and archaeological remains at Godolphin Mine (including three listed buildings) can also be grouped together, reflecting the significance of the whole mine complex not only for its contribution to our understanding of the development of mining techniques but also for its strong historic interest through association with the Godolphin family. In all, 19 HARs were produced for the significant components at

Godolphin, and together these form a single Register Entry for the whole estate.

Grouping archaeology, historic buildings and designed elements of the landscape where appropriate within a single Register Entry allows for a more contextual description of the way assets relate to each other and the way a complex site has developed as a historic entity. This ensures that the significance of the key assets are understood and valued not only in their own right but also within a wider historical context. Here at Godolphin the key to the site's importance is its historical landscape: the coherence of a complex but understandable pattern of important remains. The move towards unified designation and a holistic description enables recognition of the significance and integrity of the site in its entirety, which in turn increases understanding and explains why assets are designated, leading to the provision of better information and greater engagement by owners, managers and professionals.

Jill Guthrie
Heritage Protection Department, English Heritage



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The Godolphin estate in Cornwall. The key to managing a complex site of this kind is to understand its historical landscape.