



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

PRINCIPLES OF SELECTION FOR LISTED BUILDINGS

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Introduction

1. This document sets out the statutory criteria and general principles that the Secretary of State applies when deciding whether a building is of special architectural or historic interest and should therefore be added to the list of buildings compiled under section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (“the 1990 Act”). The Secretary of State takes into account these criteria and general principles when considering his decision.

The Selection of Listed Buildings

Background

2. England is exceptionally rich in its heritage of historic buildings – some are national icons, known the world over. They range from the great cathedrals and houses, to more modest yet fascinating structures distributed right across the land. Together, they form a key aspect of the historic environment which lies all around us, and which enriches the lives of present and future generations.
3. Processes of classification are necessary for the practical purposes of identifying and protecting individual buildings. This is achieved through the statutory system for listing buildings. Listing is a celebration of special architectural and historic interest, and plays a vital part in safeguarding this legacy. It protects a diverse range of buildings and structures, from palaces to barns, tombstones to skate parks, sculpture to cinemas.
4. Listed buildings benefit from enhanced protection through the planning system through the processes of Listed Building Consent (LBC) and planning permission. Government planning policy can be found in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Listing

5. Section 1 of the 1990 Act imposes a duty on the Secretary of State to compile or approve a list or lists of buildings of *special* architectural or historic interest ('listed buildings') as a guide to planning authorities when carrying out their planning functions.
6. For the purposes of listing, a 'building' includes any structure or erection and a 'listed building' includes any object or structure: (a) fixed to it; or (b) within its curtilage which, although not fixed to it, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948, unless the list entry expressly excludes such things. In some cases, such as for works of art or sculptures, it will be necessary to consider the degree and purpose of annexation to the land or building to determine whether it may be listed under the 1990 Act.
7. Listed buildings are graded to reflect their relative special architectural and historic interest.
 - Grade I buildings are of exceptional special interest;
 - Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest;
 - Grade II buildings are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them.
8. Details of listed buildings in England can be found by consulting the [National Heritage List for England](#) (NHLE), hosted on behalf of the Secretary of State by Historic England.
9. Requests for a building to be added to or removed from the statutory list, for a building's list entry to be amended, or for the issue of a Certificate of Immunity from listing under the terms of section 6 of the 1990 Act (see paragraphs 24-25 below), should be directed to Historic England (details of how to do so can be found at, <https://historicengland.org.uk/>). Historic England assesses such requests before submitting its recommendation to the Secretary of State (**Note 1**).
10. Requests for a Building Preservation Notice to be served under the terms of section 3 of the 1990 Act (see paragraphs 26-27 below) should be directed to the relevant local planning authority.

11. The Secretary of State's policy is to provide as much clarity as possible about where the special interest of buildings lie when listing them or revising an existing list entry. Section 1(5A) of the 1990 Act allows the Secretary of State to state definitively in a list entry if particular parts or features of the building (including any objects or structures that are fixed to it, or in its curtilage) are not part of the listed building or of special architectural or historic interest. Unless particular parts or features have been so excepted the protection conferred by listing applies to the whole of the building, not just its exterior (**Note 2**).
12. If the Secretary of State decides not to list a building that building will not usually be reconsidered for listing for a period of five years, unless new substantial evidence or understanding regarding its claims to special architectural or historic interest, or of threats of harm to, or total loss of, its significance, comes to light in the intervening period. In exceptional cases, this discretion could be exercised differently.
13. The Secretary of State will remove a building from the list if it no longer meets the statutory criteria. This may be because of new evidence or understanding of the special architectural or historic interest of the building, or a material change of circumstances (for example, the authorised demolition of a building). Where there is suggestion that there has been deliberate neglect, damage or destruction of a building, this will only result in consideration for de-listing after a rigorous appraisal of the facts has taken place. Requests for de-listing will not generally be considered whilst the building in question is the subject of enforcement action by the local planning authority or such action is likely, or is subject to other legal proceedings. If works regarding which listed building consent has been granted have been started but not completed, requests for de-listing will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
14. Requests for the internal review of listing decisions by the Secretary of State should be sent to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport within 28 days of publication of the decision. Details of the grounds on which an internal review may be carried out are published on GOV.UK (this can be found on www.gov.uk).
15. 'Local listing' – the non-statutory identification of heritage assets (including buildings) of local interest by local planning authorities – is a separate, but complementary process.

Statutory criteria

16. The Secretary of State uses the following criteria when assessing whether a building is of special architectural or historic interest and therefore should be added to the statutory list:
 - **Architectural Interest:**
To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its design, decoration or craftsmanship. Special interest may also apply to particularly significant examples of building types or techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms. Engineering and technological interest can be an important consideration for some buildings. For more recent buildings in particular, the functioning of the building (to the extent that this reflects on its original design and planned use, where known) will also be a consideration. Artistic distinction can also be a factor relevant to the architectural interest of buildings and objects and structures fixed to them.
 - **Historic Interest:**
To be able to justify special historic interest a building must illustrate important aspects of the nation's history and / or have closely substantiated historical associations with nationally important individuals, groups or events; and the building itself in its current form will afford a strong connection with the valued aspect of history.

17. When making a listing decision, the Secretary of State may also take into account:

- **Group value:**

The extent to which the exterior of the building contributes to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings of which it forms part, generally known as group value. The Secretary of State will take this into account particularly where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning (e.g. squares, terraces or model villages) or where there is a historical functional relationship between the buildings. Sometimes group value will be achieved through a co-location of diverse buildings of different types and dates.

- **Fixtures and features of a building and curtilage buildings:**

The desirability of preserving, on the grounds of its architectural or historic interest, any feature of the building consisting of a man-made object or structure fixed to the building or forming part of the land and comprised within the curtilage of the building.

- **The character or appearance of conservation areas:**

In accordance with the terms of section 72 of the 1990 Act, when making listing decisions in respect of a building in a conservation area, the Secretary of State will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

General principles

18. Age and rarity: the older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. The following chronology is meant as a guide to assessment; the dates are indications of likely periods of interest and are not absolute. The relevance of age and rarity will vary according to the particular type of building because for some types, dates other than those outlined below are of significance. However, the general principles used are that:

- before 1700, all buildings that retain a significant proportion of their original fabric are likely to be regarded of special interest;
- from 1700 to 1850, most buildings that retain a significant proportion of their original fabric are likely to be regarded of special interest, though some selection is necessary;
- from 1850 to 1945, because of the greatly increased number of buildings erected and the much larger numbers that have survived, progressively greater selection is necessary;
- careful selection is required for buildings from the period after 1945, another watershed for architecture.

19. Buildings less than 30 years old: such buildings are not normally considered to be of special architectural or historic interest because they have yet to stand the test of time. It may nevertheless be appropriate to list some modern buildings despite their relatively recent construction – for example, if they demonstrate outstanding quality (generally interpreted as being equivalent to Grade I or II*). The Secretary of State calculates the age of a building from the point at which the ground was first broken.

20. Aesthetic merits: the appearance of a building (both its intrinsic architectural merit or any group value) is often a key consideration in listing, but the special interest will not always be reflected in obvious external visual quality. Buildings that are important for reasons of technological or material innovation, engineering or as illustrating particular aspects of social or economic history, may have little external visual quality but can still be of special interest.

21. Selectivity: where a building qualifies for listing primarily on the strength of its special architectural interest, the fact that there are other buildings of similar or identical quality elsewhere is not likely to be a major consideration. However, a building may be listed primarily because it represents a

particular historical type to ensure that examples of such a type are preserved. Listing in these circumstances is largely a comparative exercise and needs to be selective where a substantial number of buildings of a similar type and quality survive. In such cases, the Secretary of State's policy is generally to list only the most representative or most significant examples of the type.

- 22. National interest:** the emphasis in this document is to establish consistency in selection to ensure that not only are all buildings of strong intrinsic national architectural or historic interest included on the statutory list, but also the most significant or distinctive regional buildings that together make a major contribution to the national historic stock. For instance, the best examples of vernacular buildings will normally be listed because they illustrate the importance of distinctive local and regional building traditions. Similarly, for example, some buildings will be listed because they represent a nationally significant but localised industry, such as shoemaking in Northamptonshire or cotton production in Lancashire.
- 23. State of repair:** the general state of repair and upkeep of a building will not usually be a relevant consideration when deciding whether it meets the test of special architectural or historic interest. The Secretary of State will list a building that has been assessed as meeting the statutory criteria, irrespective of its state of repair. Loss of original fabric will however be a relevant consideration when considering special interest.

Certificates of Immunity from listing

- 24.** Upon application the Secretary of State may choose to issue a Certificate of Immunity (COI) from listing under the terms of section 6 of the 1990 Act. A COI precludes the Secretary of State from listing a building, and a local planning authority from serving a building preservation notice in relation to it, for a period of five years from the date of issue. COIs provide the owners / developers of a building with certainty over its possible listing. Upon application for a COI, the building is considered for listing: this may result in the Secretary of State choosing to list the building, to issue the COI, or – in exceptional circumstances – to do neither.
- 25.** The Secretary of State's policy is not to accept applications for a subsequent COI for a building if the current one remains valid for two years or longer, and then, only if there is clear justification for doing so. Whilst renewal is common, it cannot be assumed that a second COI will be issued as a fresh assessment will be completed and circumstances may have changed since the issue of the original, particularly if new evidence or understanding regarding the building's claims to special architectural or historic interest comes to light in the intervening period.

Building Preservation Notices

- 26.** Local planning authorities have the power under section 3 of the 1990 Act to serve a Building Preservation Notice (BPN) on the owner and occupier of a building that is not listed, but which they consider to be: (a) of special architectural or historic interest; and (b) in danger of demolition or of alteration in such a way as to affect its character as a building of such interest. Local planning authorities choosing to serve a BPN must, at the same time, submit an application to the Secretary of State through Historic England for the building to be added to the statutory list.
- 27.** Once a BPN has been served on the owner and occupier of the building to which it relates, it remains in force for six months, but will cease to be in force before that point if the Secretary of State lists the building or informs the local planning authority in writing that he does not intend to do so. Whilst the BPN is in force, the building is treated as if it were a listed building.

Notes

Note 1:

Historic England publishes a range of Listing Selection Guides (<https://www.historicengland.org.uk>). These provide detailed information relating to different building types and indicate features that are considered significant when assessing the special architectural or historic interest of particular building types from different periods, regions, or styles. It is recognised that some buildings are unique or will fall into more than one building type. These Selection Guides are updated and revised as needed to reflect our growing understanding of the significance of particular types of building. Their content does not form part of the Secretary of State's policy or guidance on listing.

Note 2:

Historic England has published a note to help in understanding how to judge whether a building is within the curtilage of a listed building, <https://www.historicengland.org.uk>.

We can also provide documents to meet the specific requirements for people with disabilities. Please email enquiries@culture.gsi.gov.uk

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