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Conservation bulletin

Conservation Areas

For 40 years conservation areas have helped to preserve the special character of places – not only at the heart of our historic cities and market towns but in their suburbs and surrounding villages.

Ormskirk in West Lancashire is a conservation area that successfully sustains its own special sense of place. In 2009 West Lancashire Council was given an award by English Heritage in recognition of its management of conservation areas – and in particular for providing clear, accessible information and maintaining public engagement.

ENGLISH HERITAGE

Editorial: *Conservation Areas*

For 40 years, conservation areas have helped to maintain the character and appearance of historic places – but how do we ensure they are fit for purpose for the 21st century?

The concept of the conservation area was introduced in the Civic Amenities Act 1967 sponsored by Duncan Sandys. It was a pioneering measure, the first piece of legislation to acknowledge the value of whole groups of buildings and to recognise the importance of conserving the character of entire areas. By the end of 1967, the first four conservation areas had been designated. Today there are more than 9,300 – eloquent testimony of their importance to the quality of life in modern Britain.

Looking back, it is easy to see why the concept seized the popular imagination, coming at a time when large parts of our historic towns and cities were being demolished to make way for residential estates, shopping centres and ring roads, and when comprehensive redevelopment ruled the day.

Today, conservation areas are a crucial component of local identity and community cohesion; the element of England's heritage that is all around us and that touches all our lives.

Designated by local authorities, they provide an effective mechanism for managing change to places on an area-wide basis, but until this year we had relatively little idea of their condition, or any hard evidence of the challenges and pressures they are facing.

That is why in the autumn of 2008 English Heritage launched its conservation areas census. We asked every local authority in England to assess the condition of its conservation areas using a common questionnaire. It is a measure of their importance and levels of local concern that around 75 per cent of local authorities responded. The results of this first-ever national survey were published in June 2009 as part of English Heritage's Heritage at Risk initiative.

The survey found that around 1 in 7 conservation areas is at risk. Many more have serious problems. Only 15 per cent of conservation areas have seen an improvement since 2006, just over 50 per cent have an appraisal, and only 13 per cent have Article 4 Directions to prevent damaging small-scale changes, like replacement windows. Urban conservation areas are twice as likely to be at risk as rural ones.

Given their vital importance to the cultural heritage of the nation, and the clear intention that new development should preserve or enhance local character, the survey makes worrying reading. Current threats are undermining the original aspirations behind the legislation. With the importance of tackling climate change, enlightened stewardship of what we have is essential if we are to secure best value from existing resources and the embodied energy they contain.

In this edition, we examine the roots of area conservation 40 years ago and look ahead to ways in which local designations can help to sustain local identity and distinctiveness. That can only happen if we truly understand the qualities that make an area special, and have the right tools and practical strategies for looking after it.

Having obtained up-to-date evidence of the condition of our most important places and the threats they face, our next task is to make sure that the right incentives and regulatory mechanisms are in place to manage them sustainably and to ensure that they continue to thrive for the next 40 years.

Philip Davies
Planning & Development Director (South), English Heritage

Conservation Bulletin is published three times a year by English Heritage and circulated free of charge to more than 15,000 conservation specialists, opinion formers and decision-makers world wide. Its purpose is to communicate new ideas and disseminate published advice to everyone concerned with the understanding, management and public enjoyment of England's rich and diverse historic environment and to generate discussion and debate.

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Conservation Areas at 40

It is not just individual buildings that make a place special – just as important is the way they relate to one another and the public spaces in between.

Conservation areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Introduced in the Civic Amenities Act 1967, during the past 40 years they have proved an effective mechanism for enabling local authorities to manage change on an area-wide basis.

However, the 1967 Act provided few controls and, although from time to time the regulations have been amended to address some new threats and challenges, there is still widespread public concern that the original aspirations remain to be matched by a consistent or adequate management regime that would allow local authorities to actively manage these irreplaceable national assets. Permitted development rights, and the massive increase in street clutter generated by traffic management and calming schemes have caused demonstrable harm to many conservation areas – undermining their local distinctiveness. Indeed, one of the most common responses to Heritage Protection Reform has been the need to streamline and improve the management of conservation areas.

In this section, Chris Smith recalls the role of the Civic Trust in spearheading the movement for the protection of historic areas, and the pioneering work of Gordon Cullen and Roy Worskett on townscape, while Sarah Buckingham looks to the future and the increasing importance of local designation in managing change. *Conservation Principles* provide the key to unlocking better understanding of the value of places, as well as individual historic assets. Ptolemy Dean celebrates some of our most special places and the threats they face, while Robert Adam challenges an innate prejudice in the Vienna Memorandum which, he argues, encourages the fragmentation rather than integration of historic places, and highlights how we should not confuse modernity with modernism, as some of the best new buildings in historic places have been designed in the continuing classical and vernacular traditions.

Conservation areas: early history and urban design versus significance

Chris Smith
Planning and Development Director (West), English Heritage

When the Civic Trust was founded in 1957 its aims were to improve the appearance of town and country. With that in mind, its early programme was one of removing eyesores, undertaking tree planting and addressing perceived problems in planning and architecture, through campaigns, conferences and awards schemes. However, one issue was paramount to its senior officers – President Duncan Sandys prime among them – and to the amenity societies to whom the Trust was designed to give voice and succour.

The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act was shaping a radically changed Britain that took little account of the qualities of the existing built environment – apart, that is, from the tiny proportion protected by ancient monument legislation and by the provisions for listing buildings contained in the Act.

It was to address this deficit that the Civic Trust spearheaded a movement for the protection of historic areas through the designation of conservation areas (CAs). The principal result was the Civic Amenities Act 1967. The document came, as all Acts then did, accompanied and explained by a government circular (Circular 53/67). It was further described, expanded and given context by a remarkable special edition of the *Architects' Journal*. (This is more remarkable, perhaps, in retrospect than at the time. In today's climate it is difficult to imagine the *Architects' Journal* dedicating a whole edition to a study of the importance of historic context that contained not a single case study of a modern building.)

The full title of the Civic Trust's document was *Conservation Areas. Preserving the Architectural and Historic Scene*. The attached circular, however, was far more expansive when it came to defining what might justify the designation of a CA: '[they] will naturally be of many different kinds . . . often centred on listed buildings, but not always, pleasant groups of other buildings, open spaces, trees, a

Stratford-upon-Avon: an example of the kind of post-war building that began to focus debate about how new architecture could best be accommodated within the existing built environment. The architect, Sir Frederick Gibberd, considered the retention of the buildings to the original street line but this was rejected as the resulting junction would have been too congested. © Gibberd

Whitecross Street is London's oldest surviving street market and one of more than 9,000 conservation areas in which distinctiveness has been protected through the benign powers of the 1967 Civic Amenities Act.
© Richard Dumville, English Heritage

historic street pattern, a village green or features of archaeological interest'.

Faced by such broad options and when seeking to enumerate the likeliest candidates for protection, the Civic Trust turned to the list of 324 towns produced by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) when it formulated its response to Professor Sir Colin Buchanan's report *Traffic in Towns* (Ministry of Transport 1963). Towns were included because they met a range of criteria that encompassed a well-preserved town plan, survival of major features such as a town wall, castle or abbey or a significant number of listed buildings.

Whatever may be thought of these rather mixed criteria, they were undoubtedly meant to define areas where the historic environment, in the broad sense we are accustomed to today, substantially survived, but was clearly threatened by the implications of *Traffic in Towns* and extensive planned change. The list was promptly appropriated by those planning officers newly given responsibility for investigating the potential for the CAs on their patch – something they had to take seriously since Circular 53/67 said 'conservation areas will however be numerous; they will be found in almost every town and in many villages . . . The Ministers will watch progress and intend to review the situation in about twelve months' time.'

The CBA went some way towards defining the steps that should flow from the inclusion in their list. There was 'an argument for preparing . . . a comprehensive survey of the historic environment, illustrating its layout, its historic buildings, its urban quality and any other special characteristics. This heritage plan should, with the transportation plan suggested in the Buchanan report, form an obligatory part of the development plan process and should make specific provision for conservation of the features emphasised in the survey.'

And yet, by the time the Ministry of Housing and Local Government allowed a principal adviser to set out his thoughts on the practical steps required to take this process forward, a significant change of emphasis had occurred. Roy Worskett cited what was probably the period's most influential urban design publication, Gordon Cullen's *Townscape* (Cullen 1961), and applied analytical and presentational techniques that embraced Cullen's thinking. Worskett's *The Character of Towns*, published in 1969, was to adorn the shelves and inform the thinking of many of those planning officers who were to form the nucleus of the emerging profession of conservation officers.

Strangely, though, the book was surprisingly devoid of apparent understanding of the historic environment. Rather what was to be analysed, surveyed and conserved was 'the art of townscape'. It is likely that the knowledgeable author simply did not reveal his understanding of how the townscape in question came to be, but the result is that townscape examples and case studies are described in a purely descriptive (and not always accurate) way. Take, for example, this statement: 'Most of the old towns still have small shops with elongated sites which were once back gardens' – there is no discussion of burgage plots, and indeed all such

backland is discussed only in terms of development potential. Or: 'In Devizes, a long curving road contrasts with and encloses an inner arrangement of spaces' – a reductive shorthand for the way in which the Devizes plan tells the tale of the development of town and castle and the road in question indicates the line of the outer bailey.

The result of this approach was that one of the most influential books about the management of CAs described a process of well-mannered urban design rather than one in which a deep understanding of the historic development of the place informed all decision-making.

This approach, based more on appearance than significance, could result in differing judgements as contemporary commentaries on the same building, indeed the same photograph, show.

In the Civic Trust's *Conservation Areas* the new building at the junction of Sheep Street and High Street in Stratford-upon-Avon is quoted approvingly as an example of 'new materials being used to echo traditional effects'. In the *Character of Towns*, on the other hand, Worskett notes disapprovingly that the building (the design of which he criticises anyway) 'is set back on a corner making a pointless space that opens up and destroys the town's firm street pattern'.

Understanding of significance was already integral to the listing of buildings and it was soon realised that a similar system of control was needed for CAs. The optimistic belief that change could be controlled for the better was tempered by the realisation that demolition was the greater threat. Within seven years the critical weakness of the first Act had been acknowledged and the Town and Country Amenities Act 1974 had brought demolition in CAs under meaningful control. Strengthened by powers to resist demolition, CAs were able to build on the urban design processes of the early years while insisting that significance and re-usability were fully understood and evaluated before major interventions were allowed. ■

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Truth, falsity and tradition in the management of the historic environment

Robert Adam
Robert Adam Architects

Every constitution, law, charter, declaration and manifesto, for all the usual claims about timeless principles or universal validity, is a product of its time. All contain within them theories and ideas that were either so engrained as to be unrecognised or considered to be ideologically right for all time. Their position can remain unchallenged for many years, locking in fundamental faults and obsolete ideologies.

In heritage and conservation the Venice Charter is one such document. Written in 1964, it was the key event in the worldwide heritage movement. It came out the year before Corbusier's unexpected death, the Smithsons' Economist Plaza had just been completed and the BT tower was topped out that July. It is no accident that it was at this moment that the Venice Charter told us that restoration work 'must bear a contemporary stamp', that 'replacements of missing parts … must be distinguishable from the original' and that restoration work must not 'falsify the artistic or historical evidence'.

While Corbusier and the Smithsons may still have many admirers, their work is now considered historic, many of their ideas are no longer accepted and whole architectural and ideological movements have come and gone. The Venice Charter, however, remains intact as the founding document of the heritage movement and its principles are written into national and regional laws and regulations around the world. Notwithstanding its many sensible provisions it has been one of the instruments in the preservation of post-war architectural ideology. This has specific consequences in the historic environment.

In particular, the idea that deliberate difference is an obligation to the historic process persists to this day in the design and conservation professions. It even has special regulatory protection. PPG1 tells us that local planning authorities 'should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative'. Other policy documents cross reference this statement or create similar directives. The inclusion of these special provisions, with no corresponding allowance for traditional design, is an eloquent demonstration that deliberate difference is problematic and that traditional solutions are the default position (in fact, given the powerful position of

the design professions in the regulatory system, this is doubtful).

This stand-off between popular sentiment and professional dogma is unsatisfactory. The very existence of an undeclared design philosophy and its powerful position in a definitive, if historic, document is bound to lead to uncertainty, a framework for rogue interpretation by regulators and inappropriate outcomes. The principle of deliberate difference – the contemporary stamp, the idea that historic 'evidence' can be falsified – needs to be re-examined from first principles.

In the examination that follows it is taken as axiomatic that there is a popular modern sentiment that historic places with a valued character should have that character perpetuated, not altered or destroyed by explicit contrast or difference. Anyone involved in the control system will recognise this. It is also taken as axiomatic that the idea that history is a process that can only be properly expressed by explicit contrast and difference is a theory and not a fact. It is a theory, furthermore, that cannot be defended solely by reference to examples of unconsidered contrast from the past. Conservation is the control of the physical environment in response to the aspirations of the community; recording historic attitudes does not make a case for disregarding modern attitudes.

A recent and unusually explicit example promoting the principle of deliberate contrast and difference in the historic environment is in the *Vienna Memorandum on World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture – Managing the Historic Urban Landscape*, adopted by UNESCO in 2005. This can serve for the analysis. Like the Venice Charter, it includes a number of sound and balanced objectives. In paragraph 21, however, is found a statement that lies in a direct line of descent from the modernist principles of the Venice Charter: 'urban planning, contemporary architecture and preservation of the historic urban landscape should avoid all forms of pseudo-historic design, as they constitute a denial of both the historical and the contemporary alike'.

The subject of this directive is 'pseudo-historic design' – literally, 'false historic design'. Logically, of course, it is not possible to be falsely historical. Anything that occurs will become an historical event. This cannot be false and, even if the attempt is to falsify, that is in itself a relevant piece of history. None the less, the memorandum clearly seeks to exclude any kind of building operation that makes a particular kind of connection with history that can be called false. The prohibition is intended to be wide as it is '*all* forms of pseudo-historic design' (my emphasis). So what is pseudo-historic design and why should all forms of it be avoided?

This is explained in the second part of the sentence: 'as they constitute a denial of both the historical and the contemporary alike'. But how

St Malo (left). Like many post-war reconstruction projects in continental Europe, the damaged areas of old St Malo were rebuilt to retain the character and traditional appearance of the intra-mural town. Knowledgeable observers can easily detect the post-war work but the character of the new work is seamless with the old. © Robert Adam

Neumarkt, Dresden (above). The post-unification rebuilding of the old square, unreconstructed since the Second World War, was the subject of a heated debate. Deliberately contrasting buildings were proposed by the authorities but, following a public vote, the new buildings, although clearly modern, are designed to follow in the distinctive tradition of the bourgeois houses and shops of old Dresden. © Robert Adam

192–198 Piccadilly, London (left); architect the author. Completed in 2007, the building has a wholly original treatment of the classical vocabulary and is designed to accommodate modern commercial requirements (shops and offices) while retaining the traditional character of Piccadilly, which, although built over two centuries, is predominantly classical. © Morley von Sternberg

Sheridan House, Winchester (above); architect the author. Completed 25 years ago to house shops and offices, today this is clearly a late 20th-century building but it is also part of the historic urban heritage of the city. It is not a copy of any other buildings but part of the traditional character of the place. © John Critchely

can you deny history or the historical? The past has happened and is history. Equally, but less significantly, how can you deny 'the contemporary'? The contemporary is what happens now and then becomes history. To believe that you can deny history means that there must be two kinds of history: true, authentic or real history; and false, inauthentic or unreal history, all regardless of the fact that each one actually happened. At the same time, there is a current or contemporary event that will become *true* history and one which, therefore, cannot become true history – regardless of the fact they are actually taking place.

This is a theory of history based on a corruption of historical methodology.

Historians divide the past into pieces: eras, epochs or periods. To do so, they have to identify each one as distinct or different and to do that they must find things that are unique or specific to that period. A historical description of a period can then be based on that which is particular to the period. This can in turn lead to the assumption that all that is genuine or significant about that period is that which is unique or new. It is but a small step to assume that anything in the present, anything contemporary, in order to be a historically 'true' representation of the present, must be that which is unique and has never before occurred.

The principle that the original, the novel and the unprecedented are the only historical truth and that newness drawn from the familiar and the conventional can be historically false has significant visual consequences. All direct allusion to historical forms is to be avoided and the success of the designer will not be measured by beauty, function or contextualisation but by originality or aesthetic innovation. Disjuncture with a historical context will not only be desirable it will be seen as historically consistent, truthful and correct.

Revealed in this way, it is surprising that such a doctrine has survived so long in the regulation of the historic environment. Once it is accepted that there can be no logical claim to historic falsity and no supportable assertion that the contemporary is necessarily different, the historic environment becomes more manageable. The promotion of deliberate contrast and difference in areas that are conserved precisely because of their consistency of character was always problematic.

This understanding allows us to move from a concept of our built heritage as history to heritage as tradition. History is fixed and, while it may be open to differences in interpretation or discovery, the facts are immutable. Tradition, however, retains

the memory of the past but is always in the process of development. The historicist fallacy is based on an understanding of the past as a series of sequential and mutually exclusive events with objects left behind as the record of those events. Tradition, on the other hand, is a dynamic process that unites the past with the present. In history the past is evidence of what has been and will never return; in tradition the past is always present.

Once the historicist fallacy is exposed there can be no conflict between tradition and modernity. Tradition is also largely coextensive with heritage. Heritage (in its widest sense) and tradition are both a relationship with the past in the present, have an active relationship with society and are the medium through which communities take their identity. Our cultural heritage is made up of our traditions of language, manners and practice; our physical heritage with our traditional interaction with our historic buildings and places.

The continuity of tradition is a reinforcement and reassertion of our identity and heritage. If we can leave behind the fallacious theories of the early 20th century, the design and conservation professions can be released from a misplaced anxiety about historical truth. Our historical environment will no longer be threatened by a dogged pursuit of novelty promoted in the cause of an authenticity, which is in any event unavoidable. Our valued places and buildings can be strengthened and reinvigorated by the creative development of the traditions that created them. Above all, we can join with the public, who understand all this implicitly, in their unselfconscious celebration of our heritage and traditions. ■

Celebrating special areas

Ptolemy Dean
Ptolemy Dean Architects

We do seem as a nation increasingly directed towards making individualistic and 'iconic' architectural statements. One can see this 'exciting and bold approach' on endless television design programmes and in the increasingly thick and glossy Sunday newspaper supplements. Wonderful though this may be, buildings all too often assert their new character regardless of location or setting, and those who resist this often unsophisticated architectural approach are somehow resisting inevitable progress. The concept of making an attractive 'background' is now very much out of fashion, and the very suggestion of adhering to architectural 'good manners' is about as absurd in some quarters as still wearing a bowler hat to work.

And yet, our towns and villages are composed not of these lone architectural statements, but of a remarkably rich and unfolding sequence of external spaces that are shaped by buildings, often quite ordinary. Indeed, we barely notice the individual buildings themselves as they merge into something transfixing: areas where the sum of the whole is far greater than the individual parts. Whether we understand it or not, our pleasure in towns and villages appears to a large degree to be shaped by the physical sensations of vista, enclosure and variety. These urban sensations are provided by the basic placing of buildings, often arranged in hard street edges, sometimes organic and random, sometimes symmetrically composed, but always enriching as they appear to be constantly evolving as we move through them and in differing patterns of daylight. It is hard to know how precisely these forces work, and what considerations are more important than others. Gordon Cullen attempted to define them in his seminal work *Townscape* (Cullen 1961), while John Piper photographed them to accompany John Betjeman's evocative texts in the Shell Guides series published by John Murray in the 1950s. What is all too abundantly clear from the great majority of 'urban interventions' since this time is that pleasurable urban compositions are near impossible to reproduce now, and therefore those that have survived need to be cherished. This is why the invention of 'conservation areas' was such a vital legislative innovation, and one that must be protected at all costs.

Unfortunately as the 'magical' values of conservation areas are so difficult to analyse and quantify, there has been a tendency to attach value only to the specifically listed buildings that lie within them. When combined with the presently fashionable idea that non-listed buildings can readily be replaced by new 'iconic' ones, we are confronted with the fundamental nemesis of the whole idea on which conservation areas are based. Here we are returning to the dark days when background buildings had no formal architectural value; only the listed buildings were worth keeping, but left to fight it out with new, striking and perhaps discordant neighbours. Occasionally this can yield dramatic and startling results. More typically it has resulted in the loss of the very features of completeness and continuity that had made the designation of a conservation area valuable in the first place.

Two recent developments are encouraging. The

Recently saved from demolition, the unlisted Smithfield poultry buildings in the City of London add important townscape quality to the conservation area.
© Ptolemy Dean

saving of the unlisted Smithfield Market poultry buildings in the City of London against a proposed and grotesquely overbearing office development has allowed buildings of great townscape quality in a conservation area to survive. In this case it is frankly astonishing that their destruction should have ever been contemplated in the first place, given that they were owned by the local authority and had obvious appeal for creative re-use.

There are also hopes that a public enquiry may yield success against the proposed redevelopment of a large section of the historic City of Lancaster, where a beautifully shaped 'prow' of historic (and largely unlisted) buildings of various ages remains threatened. A new shopping precinct here is supported by the local authority as a way of competing economically with other cities in the neighbourhood. The unfortunate consequence of such development would have been the loss of the very essence of place that distinguishes it from its neighbours. No new development can ever hope to replicate the intricate variety and texture of old buildings in an historic city centre, and the greatest value in a city of the quality of Lancaster surely lies in its remarkable 'completeness' as an historic urban entity. Such an asset will find economic value if creatively developed.

Lancaster: the survival of this beautifully shaped 'prow' of historic (and largely unlisted) buildings of various ages is threatened by a new shopping precinct.
© Ptolemy Dean

These two examples of widespread demolition within conservation areas are (or should have been) obvious matters to defend. Conservation areas also protect the buildings that lie within them from insensitive change to their detailed external appearance. In this they have been remarkably successful. But a far more insidious and widespread threat to all conservation areas is the increasing upgrading of buildings for environmental and energy conservation reasons. Increasingly it is required that all buildings, including old and historic ones, must be made more thermally efficient. It is becoming a political and moral matter on which there can be no discussion. To some, we must all have PVCu windows and mini-wind-turbines if we are to save the planet. This is irrespective of the environmental impacts of the manufacture of PVCu windows and their relatively short life span in the life of many historic buildings.

The results in conservation areas are already devastating. Rather than upgrading existing timber windows to accommodate double-glazing, entirely new plastic windows are preferred, being both cheaper and quicker to install. For instance, East Sussex County Council, who have lovingly cherished painted wooden signposts in their county lanes, now seem to have been busy this summer ripping out the painted timber windows of their primary schools, many in conservation areas.

Hawes, West Yorkshire: a lone green-painted sash window box is a stark reminder of the insidious damage that replacement plastic windows can cause to local distinctiveness.

Upgrading windows in schools is laudable, but one suspects that the 'environmental' mantra did not allow even the method of their actions to be questioned. If budgets were so concerning, why could the work not be phased over a number of years to allow a more architecturally sensitive outcome?

More depressing is the effect on rural areas where the detailed architecture of buildings might only be defined by the design of their windows and doors. Particularly bad are the very areas that ought to be the most protected, such as the Yorkshire Dales National Park territories formerly in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Here, the villages and towns are composed of simple plain stone-built farmhouses that were once distinguished by the use of different coloured paints to define the outer timber framing of their sash windows. As stark white PVCu windows cannot be painted, this historic decorative tradition is being lost, replaced instead by clumsy fake glazing bars, and nasty pivoting window openings. The cumulative effect of these changes destroys the authentic appearance of these places as readily as any single 'iconic' intrusion. A lone green-painted sash window box survives in this view of Hawes, but for how long? Measures are now urgently needed to assist with meeting the necessary targets of preventing excess heat loss, but with the retention of historic windows to maintain the appearance of traditional buildings in conservation areas, before all of the efforts of the last 40 years are in vain.

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Conservation areas and the future: Heritage Protection Reform

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Heritage Protection Reform (HPR) is the process of modernising the way we all protect and manage our historic environment. HPR seeks an integrated, rationalised system for managing historic places, with partnership working at its core. Local authorities are key protectors of the historic environment and agents of reform; conservation areas are the most widely recognised and valued tools we have for identifying what is important and protecting what is special locally. HPR has to put an emphasis on reforming national systems of protection and management, the statutory basis of what we do, but the enhancement of local ownership and management of the historic environment is at its heart.

Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning for the Historic Environment

Although the Heritage Protection Bill is on ice for the time being, the consultation draft of Planning Policy Statement 15 (PPS15), published on 24 July 2009, is a significant step in reform. An up-to-date statement of national planning policy is vital for consistency with the wider planning system, but this goes further: reflecting the approaches defined in English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage 2008) it stresses the primacy of understanding the significance of any 'heritage asset' – structure, site or area – in informed, proactive management of change through the planning system. The acknowledgement that the historic environment contains many assets that possess significance, and advocacy of a common approach for all, whether nationally or locally designated or not designated at all, is highly important for the

Beach huts along the foreshore at Lowestoft. Concerns about sea-level rise in many regions have led to a growing interest in the identification of coastal features within conservation areas. © Gareth Wilson

management of the cherished places that may surround us in daily life.

PPS 15 restates the acknowledged need for good plan-making at regional and local levels; early engagement through pre-application discussions; well-informed applications, supported by Historic Environment Records (HERs); and expert advice on decision-making. Significantly, in advocating that local authorities take into account the 'desirability of enhancing the significance of heritage assets' (Policy HE9.4) it begins to tackle the unintended consequences of the South Lakeland decision, whereby preservation or enhancement are required, but not both. More specifically, PPS 15 encourages local authorities to consider the use of Article 4 Directions, while clear policies on setting and good design will assist them in managing some of the more contentious changes within conservation areas.

HPR projects

To support local authorities in adopting new approaches advocated in HPR and PPS 15, and to manage business changes to support new ways of working, English Heritage has completed projects tackling such issues as current resources and capacity, business processes and provision of HERs.

Implementing the Heritage Protection Reforms: A Report on Local Authority and English Heritage Staff Resource, produced jointly by English Heritage, the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, was published in May 2009. It identifies an agreed set of figures for current resources and starts to consider the range of tasks that staff will perform. This will help English Heritage, local authorities and government to understand fully the resource implications of HPR and plan for change at a time of increasing budgetary pressure. Further research, to be published in a second-stage report, will identify effective models for delivering historic environment services in the light of available resources. Understanding will be supplemented by an analysis of the statutory business processes that identifies what currently works well and areas for improvement, the results of which will be published towards the end of 2009.

HERs, usually held by county or unitary authorities, are an important interface between the planning process and community interest, evidenced in PPS 15's emphasis on their value for informed decision-making. Their potential is huge and HPR seeks to maximise it. HERs should be both the key depositories for information about the whole local historic environment, and the basis for its management. They are also, however, a vital tool for increasing public engagement with and understanding of the historic environment. English

Simple elements, such as this door in Princelet Street, Spitalfields, can be important contributors to the character of conservation areas. © Gareth Wilson

Heritage is currently exploring ways in which HERs can be sustained and enhanced to support HPR standards of data and inter-operability with other management systems.

Conservation area appraisals and community involvement

If effective management relies on thorough understanding of all the elements of the historic environment, conservation area appraisals are the key to local authorities getting to grips with those features that make up the special interest of these areas. Appraisals have undoubtedly led to greater interest in some of the less-obvious heritage features within conservation areas, overlooked by national designation. While the contribution of nationally designated assets to the character and appearance of conservation areas is well understood, the importance of 'local heritage assets' is now gaining wider acceptance.

Local heritage assets can represent anything from street furniture to historic plantings, rural buildings to industrial sites. Many not only provide the setting and context for nationally designated assets, but also serve to document the 'meaning of place' built around locally significant events, people and traditions. Given that the process of identifying and characterising local heritage assets often relies heavily on the knowledge of local people, the appraisal process has fostered a more community-led approach to the designation and management of conservation areas. Tapping into this wealth of local knowledge is a central component of HPR.

English Heritage guidance on conservation area appraisals (English Heritage 2006) already encourages local authorities to identify local heritage assets, and recommends drawing upon the information already available in the so-called 'local lists', the consolidated registers of local heritage assets maintained by many local authorities. Interestingly, in many regions the situation is reversed – the appraisal process has actually provided the impetus for developing the local list.

Building upon this crossover between local lists and conservation areas, English Heritage is preparing new guidance on designating and managing local heritage assets. A key message will be that for conservation area appraisals to remain truly effective they must identify the full range of heritage features, both local and national – an outcome that can best be achieved through local authorities working in partnership with their communities.

The future

English Heritage will continue to advocate the need for legislation to consolidate reform. A crucial aspiration is to reverse the damaging impact of the 'Shimizu' judgement, a 1997 ruling that partial demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area requires conservation area consent. A programme of new guidance to support and supplement PPS15 will include criteria for national and local designation, pre-application negotiations and HERs. Our training programme will supplement these with courses for local authority and other practitioners to spread and consolidate understanding. These measures, combined with what has already been achieved, should support and empower local authorities in the positive management of conservation areas.

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This view down Steep Hill in Lincoln highlights how the character of a conservation area is dependent upon the interplay of elements such as architectural style, street pattern and surfacing.
© Gareth Wilson

Understanding Shared Places

Making the right decisions about conservation areas depends on expert knowledge and understanding of the particular qualities that make them special.

There are more than 9,300 conservation areas in England covering town and city centres, suburbs, industrial areas, rural landscapes, villages, cemeteries and residential areas. Their designation by local authorities is an explicit acknowledgement of their cultural significance and a positive commitment to actively managing their future. Designation is not intended to prevent adaptation or change, but to ensure that when new development is planned it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area. That test – of preservation or enhancement – is enshrined in legislation. *Preserve* means to maintain the existing character, and *enhance* to reinforce the qualities which warranted the original designation of the area.

So if the right decisions are to be made, it is essential that they are underpinned by expert knowledge and understanding of the particular qualities which make an area special. Our *Conservation Principles* have a vital role to play by providing a framework of cultural values against which an area can be evaluated, and the potential impact of change assessed before decisions are made. We will only get the right buildings in the right places if they emerge from a fundamental understanding of their context. But knowledge and understanding must be nurtured.

Henry Tzu-Ng and Jonathan Foyle offer a fascinating international perspective through the prism of the World Monuments Fund. Closer to home, Joanna Smith explains how characterisation and historic area assessments can be deployed to aid understanding; Mike Brown looks at the identification of character at local level through local lists and village design statements; and Jenifer White reveals new approaches to the conservation of historic landscapes by quantifying the economic value of trees in historic areas. Finally, Lucian Cook provides powerful evidence that by protecting local character conservation areas are key to maintaining economic value.

Conservation areas in China: the case of the *Juanqinzhai* in Beijing

Henry Tzu-Ng, *Vice-President, World Monuments Fund*
Jonathan Foyle, *CEO, World Monuments Fund Britain*

Conservation areas are gaining currency in Asia through the dialogue of East and West. While the concept of conservation areas more routinely relates to the natural world, Unesco's World Heritage Sites have done much to establish common values and standards across the globe for both natural and built sites. During the last 25 years, the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage has come to identify zones worthy of coherent protection, with impressive case-studies such as Pondicherry, spurred on by the late Françoise l'Hernault (1937–99) of the Ecole française d'Extrême Orient. Recently, the Getty Conservation Institute facilitated the China Principles, which sought to formulate best practice in conserving the country's cultural sites and augment the role of ICOMOS China. Since the first workshop in February 1998, Chinese delegates have visited conservation areas in Australia and New Mexico as case studies, emphasising the importance of combining Eastern and Western cultural perspectives.

World Monuments Fund (WMF) is a key partner in global conservation. WMF was created in 1965: its first affiliate office in the UK was set up in 1995. WMF works to secure the future of cultural sites through partnership building, using conservation to generate the social and economic benefits upon which sustainable care depends. WMF has worked in 156 countries, but one of its notable recent successes is in China: the Juanqinzhai, *or Studio of Exhaustion from Diligent Service, in the Forbidden City at the heart of Beijing, overseen by Henry Tzu-Ng.*

In sharp contrast to the upheaval in the Western world during the later 18th century, China endured as the world's largest, richest and most stable kingdom under the rule of that century's longest-reigning monarch, the Emperor Qianlong. His 60-year reign (1736–95) was essentially a last flowering – a period of peace and prosperity that China would not experience again for another 200 years.

Qianlong's most personal project was his long-anticipated *Ningshougong* – an extravagant retirement area that he created between 1771 and 1776 on 4.9 hectares (12 acres) of the Forbidden City's 73 hectares (180 acres) in the North-East quadrant of the imperial complex.

The *Ningshougong* largely mimicked the Forbidden City with a central axis of large-scale ceremonial buildings, a rear section with private quarters as well as separate areas for recreation and leisure. Various sections of the complex, most of which survives, have been open to the public as exhibition galleries. One section of this retirement complex, however, remained mostly hidden away – the private garden that the emperor designed for himself.

The garden covers nearly a hectare (2 acres) and has 27 buildings and structures strewn over 4 courtyards as well as some of China's most elaborate rockeries and grottoes. Its significance stems from the provenance of its design, the extravagance of its execution and the fact that the garden and the exquisite interiors of its buildings remained relatively unchanged throughout its 200-year history.

Qianlong issued an imperial edict that ordered that his new district should remain as a retirement district for emperors: effectively, it was designed as a conservation area. The intact site was revealed only a decade ago when the Forbidden City (the Palace Museum) and WMF agreed to form an international collaboration. The first of the garden's 27 buildings, the exquisite *Juanqinzhai* (Studio of Exhaustion from Diligent Service), lined with painted silk, was conserved from 2002 to 2008, and the approach set the template for conservation of the garden's remaining buildings, rockeries, and courtyards to be completed over the next decade.

Both the high quality of the original design and construction, and its unique survival framed the central conservation challenges to the site, which were twofold: the first was how to develop the approach and methodologies to conserve a complex of historic buildings and interiors when the traditional craftsmanship and many materials used in its original construction 230 years earlier – and which represented the highest imperial quality and extravagance of its time – were no longer readily available in modern China; and the second was how to marry traditional Chinese craftsmanship with modern conservation methods.

The field of modern conservation science as we know it in the West was largely developed only in the past quarter to half a century. During that time China was isolated from much of the international community at all levels and was absent from advances in the conservation field. Meeting the first challenge required partnerships to be built within China's traditional artisan community throughout the country, and meeting the second challenge required partnerships with international conservation resources. The solution for this elite example could provide a model for the planning issues and technical approaches to emerging conservation areas throughout China.

Beijing: the exquisite *Juanqinzhai* (Studio of Exhaustion from Diligent Service) was the first building in the Emperor Qianlong's magnificent retirement garden to be restored in a joint partnership between the Palace Museum and World Monuments Fund. © WMF

When conservation work began in 2002, the Palace Museum and WMF announced the project in an international press release that highlighted the need to find artisans who still practised some of the exotic decorative techniques used in the construction of the *Juanqinzhai*, such as mulberry-bark paper work, inner-skin bamboo carving and

Conservation of the sumptuous and intricate interiors of the *Juanqinzhai* depended on finding artisans who still practised some of the exotic decorative techniques used in its original construction. © WMF

Mural painting of a crane in the theatre room of the *Juanqinzhai* – a key challenge for the restoration project was how to marry traditional Chinese craftsmanship with modern conservation methods. © WMF

double-sided embroidery for freestanding screens.

After a long search, practitioners of these traditional crafts were located in many of the same provinces that provided the original works to the Qianlong court more than 200 years ago. Zhejiang province is still the centre of fine bamboo and woodcarving; Nanjing and Suzhou remain centres for traditional brocade and embroidery and were the sources of the original textiles made for the Forbidden City during the centuries. These new working relations with artisans from remote provinces have provided a fresh source of fine traditional craftsmanship that the Palace Museum can apply to the site as a whole: the interiors of the remaining 26 buildings in the Qianlong Garden, and into the broader conservation field in China.

Partnerships in the area of modern conservation approaches and science were largely formed with institutions and experts in the US as a result of a technical mission that WMF sponsored for the Palace Museum to see how US museums handled conservation and interpretation of Chinese artefacts. The Palace Museum, as the national museum of China, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education, and secured the cooperation of both Shin Maekawa of the Getty Conservation Institute in the area of climate control and Nancy Berliner, the Curator of Chinese Art at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem Massachusetts, in the area of site interpretation.

But partnerships are, by definition, two-sided. Every specialist from the West who has worked on the Qianlong Garden has walked away deeply enriched professionally through experiencing materials and methods that they had not known about before, and has come to better understand traditional architectural craftsmanship in a country that was inaccessible to the West for most of the last century. The opportunity to work on cultural artefacts and historic architecture *in situ* greatly added to the professional knowledge they may have obtained through selected objects in foreign museum collections, and offers fresh considerations for our approach to both the entirety and elements of conservation areas closer to home.

Approaches to assessing areas

Joanna Smith
Senior Architectural Investigator, English Heritage

Central to the concept of conservation areas is the idea that particular places can have special historic or architectural interest. But how can this 'special interest' be assessed? In its guidance on conservation area appraisals (CAAs) English Heritage advocates using the approaches often grouped under the term 'characterisation': that is the mapping, describing, analysing and understanding of the existing townscape or landscape character (English Heritage 2006). Developed to serve a broad range of purposes, the various methods enable historic landscapes to be studied at different scales and resolutions, from large areas described in broad terms to detailed analyses of specific localities. Each approach shares common techniques, such as the utilisation of historic maps, but there are also differences. Some focus on synthesising existing data while others combine the interpretation of information sources with observation on the ground. The presentation of results can also vary: for some methods GIS is the most appropriate means of dissemination, while for others, an illustrated synthesised report is most suitable.

The broadest approach is historic landscape characterisation, which seeks to define the distinctive historic and archaeological character of landscape over substantial areas, typically at the level of a whole county (Clarke 2004). This essentially desk-based approach identifies broad variations in historic character. While it can provide the wider context for a conservation area and may be helpful in defining boundaries, it cannot really address questions of value and significance. However,

historic characterisation techniques can be applied to smaller areas, including towns and cities, such as the Lincolnshire Townscape Assessment. It can also be used to assess below-ground remains and is therefore relevant to the components of CAAs that address archaeological potential. But the method that has the greatest relevance for conservation areas is historic area assessment (HAA). This aims to understand and explain the character of a discrete area or neighbourhood such as a suburb, a small town or a village. In order to do this, it addresses historical and architectural development as well as factors such as distinctiveness, significance and the integrity of the historic environment.

An area-based approach to understanding has many precedents, including the well-established *Survey of London* parish volume series. But in recent years assessing the significance of historic areas has become increasingly important as a means of guiding and informing change in the built environment. Major planning and regeneration proposals such as the Housing Market Renewal Initiative, as well as significant development pressures on nationally important urban areas and the metropolitan city fringe, have had a key role in stimulating the development of techniques such as HAAs. This has resulted in a number of area studies, including Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter (Cattell and Hawkins 2000), Anfield and Breckfield, Liverpool (Menuge 2008) and South Shoreditch, London (Rogers and Smith 2007). Additionally, the historic landscape characterisation of the Thames Gateway, undertaken in 2001, has been supplemented with area assessments of Queenborough, Kent and East Tilbury, Essex.

These assessments all provide a summary of how and why the areas developed, discuss the range of buildings types, dates and forms and identify their distinctive characteristics, including, where appropriate, the definition of smaller character areas. Their findings are derived from a combination of field observation, including, in some instances, internal inspection of certain buildings, and documentary research, encompassing historic maps and photographs, planning records and published sources. The experience gained on these projects has enabled the methodology of area assessments to be refined. For example, because HAAs need to be both timely and at an appropriate resolution, three levels of assessment have been devised. These range from quick outlines to detailed studies, as time constraints, resources and the complexity of the subject area dictate.

In their aims and methods there is much common ground between HAAs and CAAs. Both are likely to incorporate elements of spatial analysis, given the increased importance attached to the skyline and views, to assess the physical and economic state of the historic environment and to note the problems and pressures to which it is subject. The significance of particular places, uses or features will also have been considered. But a CAA has a specific role to play in protecting and controlling the area's character, is tailored towards specific management needs and may result in further detailed guidance, whereas area assessments can be undertaken for many reasons, perhaps in response to planning or infrastructure projects, as an audit of the historic environment or for academic or educational study, and can be proactive as well as reactive. Furthermore, the technique can be applied to sizeable areas, much larger than that of most conservation areas, and can therefore be extended to relatively uncharted 'ordinary landscapes'.

There are a number of ways in which conservation areas can benefit from area assessments. One of the aims of an assessment might be to determine the potential for enhanced or new designation of buildings, landscapes or areas. With established

A team from English Heritage's Architectural Investigation Unit carrying out an historic area assessment of central Peckham, London Borough of Southwark, in 2008–9. This was done partly to assess the area's potential for designation as a conservation area. Derek Kendall © English Heritage

Manningham, Bradford, a once-declining urban district contains five conservation areas. Their regeneration is benefiting from historic area assessment – a powerful method for understanding and explaining the character of a neighbourhood, whether it be in the heart of a city, small town or village.

conservation areas, assessments can contribute to the refining of the boundaries and assist in framing supplementary planning documentation, as proved to be the case with the Birmingham and South Shoreditch studies (Cattell and Hawkins 2000; Rogers and Smith 2007) More broadly, the understanding contained within an assessment, which may include the discussion of regional, or even national, context as well as information on individual buildings, can be used to inform a new CAA or to amplify an existing one. And by elucidating how the built environment of an area has developed and what now constitutes its most significant elements, an HAA can contribute some answers to that essential question: what is the special interest?

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Identifying and understanding local heritage

Mike Brown

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While the protection of listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments is well established in the minds of the public and benefits from the expertise of the national agencies, the position with local heritage is less certain and its identification and protection varies considerably. The commitment of differing local authorities to their local heritage together with the degree of pride and activism of local people are important determinants in this regard. I am fortunate to work for a borough where strong support from local councillors for local heritage and vocal local amenity groups co-exist. The clamour for new conservation areas is a direct result. In this context we have developed a structured approach to identifying and understanding the area's local heritage and, derived from this, carefully prioritised and resourced proposals for their preservation and enhancement.

Local development frameworks

All core strategy policies must meet demonstrated local need and not repeat national or regional policies. A well-researched evidence base for each policy is essential if it is to be upheld at the 'independent examination in public'. This is as true for heritage policies as any other. We therefore

commissioned a borough-wide characterisation study to identify the character and relative merits of areas. We then commissioned a series of conservation area character appraisals. Together these formed a substantial body of evidence, not just of what we aim to protect but also what might potentially be designated in future. We then developed and consulted on Section 71 management proposals for each conservation area and have designated four new conservation areas.

Local list

We have a list of buildings of local architectural or historic interest that stems from the removal from the national list of many Grade III buildings during the Greater London Council survey carried out in the 1980s. There have been a number of additions since then, the criteria for selection being a watered-down version of the then-English-Heritage criteria for selection for the national list. We are presently engaged with English Heritage in developing a pilot for a new set of criteria for selecting local heritage assets. The definition of 'local heritage asset' will expand to mirror the national unified list detailed in the delayed Heritage Protection Bill.

Of course local heritage assets will not enjoy the protection that national assets do. The wording of core strategy policies will be vital if we are to improve on the present, weak position under Section 6.16 of Planning and Policy Guidance Note 15. The draft new Planning Policy Statement 15 and supporting English Heritage guidance (out to consultation at the time of writing) would benefit from being more explicit about how local authorities should seek to preserve and enhance locally listed heritage assets. It has long seemed to me an extraordinary anomaly that a modest building within a conservation area (a local designation of local heritage special interest, let us remember) is much better protected than a perhaps superior building on the local list. Further, Section 6.16 allows for local policies to protect buildings on a local list from adverse change (eg plastic windows) but no local planning authority under its normal powers can prevent the building being demolished! Clearer thinking about local heritage is urgently needed.

Article 4 Directions

With the strong support of our cabinet member Article 4 (2) Directions have been made for each of our residential conservation areas. These have the power to remove the kind of permitted development rights normally exercisable by householders to extend and alter roofs, add porches, knock down boundaries to facilitate off-street parking and replace doors and windows – all the things that cumulatively are eroding the special architectural character of much of urban and suburban England. However, most local authorities are deeply wary of introducing Article 4s; there is anxiety that they will dramatically increase development control workloads and it is feared they will open up an avalanche of compensation claims from aggrieved householders – who, lest we forget, vote. Happily, I can report that none of this has ensued; Article 4s appear largely self-regulating. There has been no substantial increase in casework – residents respond well to advice on the most sustainable products to use and a flexible customer-friendly approach – and, in line with the historic evidence from across the country, there have been no claims for compensation. Only a tiny minority objected to their 'loss of freedom' (there are always some) – the huge majority embraced enthusiastically the new controls to protect their area. Fired with this I am now instructed to seek the Secretary of State's approval for an Article 4 (1) Direction – this time to control photo-voltaic and solar panels on street-facing roofs within conservation areas, a dismal relaxation allowed under the General Permitted Development Order Amendment 2 of October 2008 (the regulation having been introduced in only the previous April!). Again a flexible approach will be taken to administering this new direction

Abbotshall Avenue, Enfield – an example of a locally listed modern building that adds significant value to its neighbourhood. © Enfield Council

The Town, Enfield – Enfield Council and English Heritage are developing a pilot for a new set of criteria for selecting local heritage assets. © Enfield Council

that balances the needs of both heritage and the planet to produce a sustainable solution.

The future for local heritage

The move from development control to development management is now well under way and conservation has a leading role to play in this evolution. We have long-since understood the inevitability of change (if only as entropy and rot!) and our role as change managers. For local heritage, the challenge will be to carry the day with too few planning powers. We will have to be persuasive, flexible and have garnered around us public and political support. Perhaps the delays in bringing forward the Heritage Protection Bill will afford a further opportunity to press further for some of the more obvious reforms:

- the same level of protection from demolition for locally listed buildings as those within conservation areas
- automatic removal of permitted-development rights upon designation of conservation areas or addition to a local list
- requiring local planning authorities when exercising their planning functions to be mindful of the need to preserve *and* enhance (rather than the present preserve *or* enhance)
- requiring applicants to submit a statement on the heritage merits of the asset and detailing the steps taken with the proposal to avoid harm (included on the draft Planning Policy Statement)
- greater support for local amenity societies.

The challenge for the protection of local heritage is ever present. Let us hope that the groundswell of public support for local heritage can be heard in Westminster.

Protecting landscapes through conservation areas

Jenifer White
Senior Landscape Adviser, English Heritage

Among the conservation areas marking their 40th anniversary is the New Walk in Leicester. Laid out in 1785, this tree-lined promenade is a rare survivor. It is interesting that one of the earliest conservation areas was actually a designed landscape. The New Walk is also registered as a park and garden of special historic interest.

Even though there are other conservation areas like New Walk, the argument that conservation-area designation is not appropriate for parks and gardens has rumbled on for more than 10 years (Dingwall and Lambert 1997). The character of many conservation areas is shaped by open spaces and trees. Planning and Policy Guidance Note 15 clearly stated that historic parks and gardens should be treated as an exception in conservation-area designation, and English Heritage's guidance endorses this approach. By 2008, more than 70 per cent of registered sites were covered to some extent by conservation areas (Lambert and Lovie 2006) but relatively few, and especially rural sites, are protected in their entirety this way. Some councils, like those in Norfolk, have used conservation areas for all registered landscapes, urban or rural. In contrast to the national Register, which does not confer any restrictions, conservation areas offer valuable controls to help preserve or enhance features such as garden structures and trees, and stop inappropriate new developments and tree works. The new draft Planning Policy Statement 15 guidance encourages the use of Article 4 Directions for parks and gardens.

There are many more designed landscapes that are of local significance and importance for a host of reasons. As a nation of gardeners, it is perhaps surprising that we do not have a more

comprehensive appraisal of our local green heritage. The county gardens trusts play an important role in raising awareness of this heritage. Their Parks and Gardens UK project (**www.parksandgardens.ac.uk**) aims to be the authoritative database. The database is still very much 'work in progress' but there are already more than 6,500 records and the project is developing links with the Heritage Gateway and local Historic Environment Records. Trusts such as Hampshire have a long record of working with communities and owners on landscape management, research and projects. The London Parks & Gardens Trust has been championing the capital's garden-square heritage through its highly successful annual Open Garden Squares Weekend (**www.opensquares.org**) and is keen to share its know-how to help other communities set up similar events.

Some street and garden trees are legacies from former landscapes. Such trees have biodiversity value as well as historic interest. Curiously the veteran trees rarely get any special recognition or care even though they are the most venerable of urban citizens. They often fall foul of the exemptions for Tree Preservation Orders. The Woodland Trust and partners are campaigning to raise awareness of our tree heritage and compiling an inventory funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (**www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk.**).

One of the threats to conservation areas identified in Heritage at Risk 2009 are problems in green spaces. From now on, street trees and urban green spaces will play an increasingly important role in tempering the effects of climate change by improving air quality, providing shade and reducing water run-off. At exactly the time we should be allowing trees to mature to reap their full benefits, London councils felled almost 40,000 street trees between 2002 and 2007, including some that were more than 100 years old. Many were removed because of insurance claims but only 1 per cent of the fellings were justified. The net effect is that London has seen its tree-scape change from large long-lived forest species like London Plane to smaller, short-lived trees like silver birches and flowering cherries. Tree officers around the country report similar trends. And on top of such issues, the government's *Trees in Towns II* (Britt and Johnston 2008) highlights that many local authorities lacked basic information about their trees, and staff, budgets, strategies and management systems did not match needs.

Character statements like that prepared for the Leicester's New Walk highlight some of these issues. *Ad hoc* planting and a variety of species with different forms and life-spans have changed the designated area's character. Similarly Nottingham City Council's Forest Grove appraisal focused attention on the problem of perpetuating the tree-scape when gardens are neglected or abandoned, and trees are removed because they are causing structural damage or are just in poor physical condition.

Queen Square, Bristol – this important civic square with attractive tree-lined walks was recently restored with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund.
© English Heritage.NMR

Attitudes to trees and green spaces are being challenged by new evaluation techniques. Street trees should be seen as valued between £8,000 and £12,000 and exceptional veterans – like the Berkeley Square planes – as £750,000 each (Neilan 2008). Councils generally assume their parks are only worth a nominal £1, but CABE recently reassessed the value of Liverpool's Sefton Park at £105 million (CABE 2009), and properties in Queen Square, Bristol, another conservation area, are 16 per cent higher than comparable ones because of its green infrastructure (Trees and Design Action Group nd). Such figures do not even include benefits such as climate-change mitigation. The multidisciplinary Trees and Design Action Group is working to improve guidance on urban trees. These initiatives could be used to push for better management of conservation areas.

With the new Planning Policy Statement out for consultation, it would be timely to review the relationship between conservation areas, gardens and parks, and the controls and tools. As well as

Victoria Park was developed by the Leicester Corporation in 1883 as an extension to the city's New Walk. The large trees create a shady canopy for promenading, an activity perhaps to be rediscovered as climate changes? © English Heritage.NMR

being of historic interest landscapes are important in defining conservation area character, and have a vital role to play as the climate changes. ■

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The economic value of conservation areas

Lucian Cook
Savills L&P Ltd

Pick up any set of estate agents' particulars for a 'desirable character property' and the dwelling's listed status will feature prominently as a cast-iron endorsement of its heritage credentials. Yet it would be far more typical to find reference to a property being located in a conservation area hidden somewhere in the small print.

At the risk of alienating the reader, it is worth noting that for many prospective home-buyers the term 'conservation' conjures unwelcome images of unduly restrictive planning policy and interference from officious local government employees. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that many in the industry do not see a conservation-area designation as a major selling point.

It would therefore be easy to dismiss the potentially positive effect that being within a conservation area has on house prices. The hard facts tell a rather a different story.

Whatever the connotations of the designation, our research shows that the quality of the built environment of an area – which conservation areas essentially seek to protect – can dramatically affect the value of house prices in the surrounding area. This goes some way to quantifying how, as a society, we value the heritage qualities of the built environment in which we live.

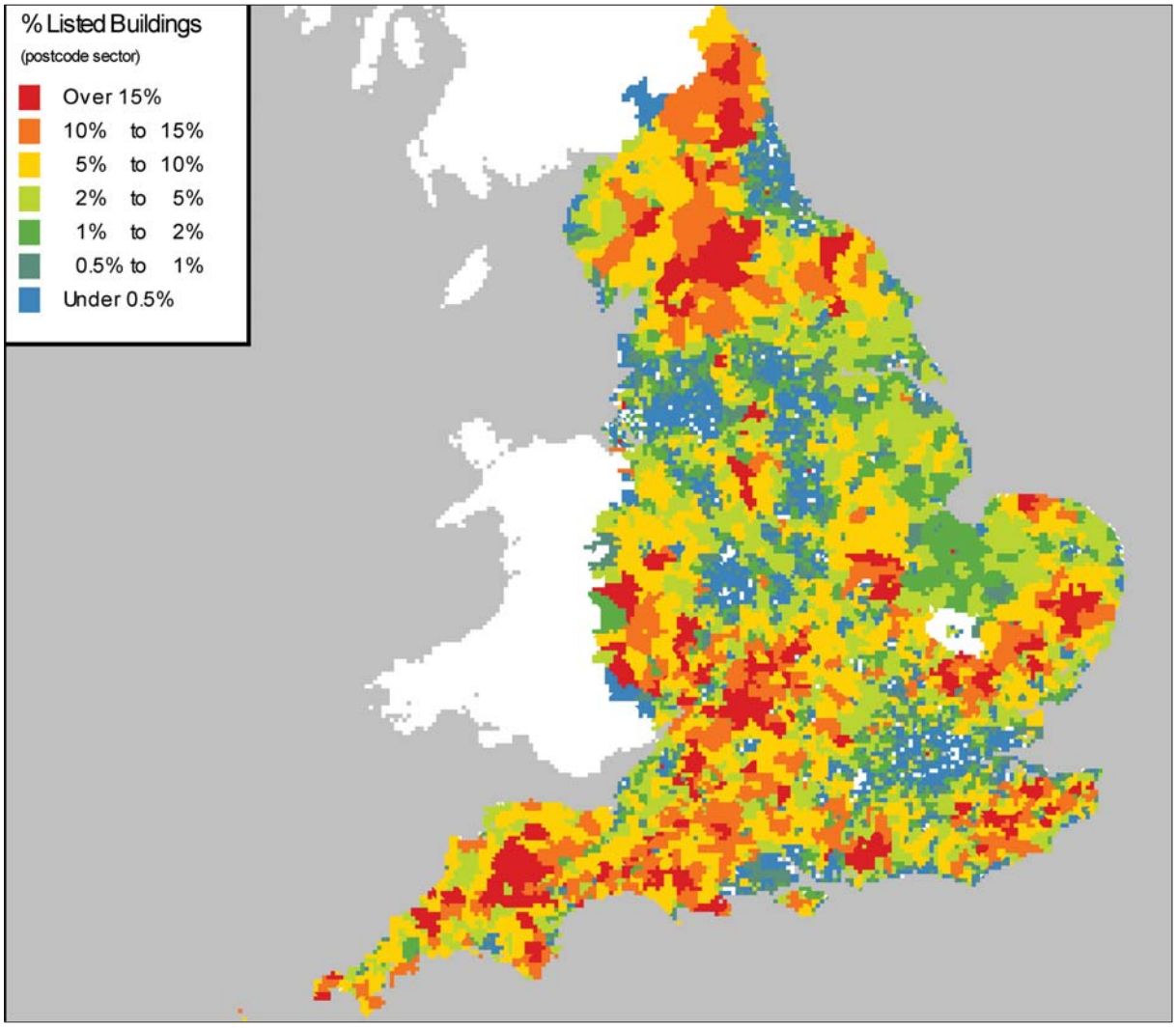
In the absence of house-price data specific to conservation areas, the number of listed buildings relative to the number of dwellings at a postcode-sector level gives us the most reliable assessment of the quality of the built environment within areas for which we can accurately determine average house prices. This enabled Savills' research department to look at the relationship between the density of listed buildings and the average house price as part of a commissioned project last year.

This analysis told us that only 6.6 per cent of all locations had more than 1 listed building for every 10 dwellings. More interestingly, it told us that within these areas prices were on average 29 per cent higher than those of the local authority in which they were located. Not only that, but it demonstrated that there was a correlation between listed-building density and prices even at lower densities.

When we produced the statistics we were keen to point out that this was not the premium that listed-building status conferred, but instead was the house-price premium that areas with a rich architectural heritage could command.

To put this in simple terms, the architectural credentials of an individual dwelling mean very little if the property looks out over a 1960s' multi-storey car park. By contrast, a reasonably sympathetically designed modern dwelling located within an area that has retained a sense of place by virtue of the quality of its overriding built heritage will in all likelihood carry a significant premium over the same dwelling within a modern housing estate.

It should then come as no surprise that within



Some post code areas have much higher proportions of listed buildings than others – and as a consequence higher average house prices. © Savills

the spa towns of England and Wales, including Bath, Cheltenham, Buxton and Harrogate, prices are 26 per cent higher than the average for their county. Furthermore, within the other trophy towns of England and Wales – such as Marlborough, Petworth, Chipping Camden and Henley-in-Arden – there is one listed dwelling for every seven properties on average. Here, again, house prices are 27 per cent higher than the average for their local authority.

In London the effect is magnified. In areas where there is more than 1 listed building for every 20 households average prices are as much as 54 per cent more than the average for the borough. London is, of course, an extreme – a world city not necessarily representative of the rest of Britain.

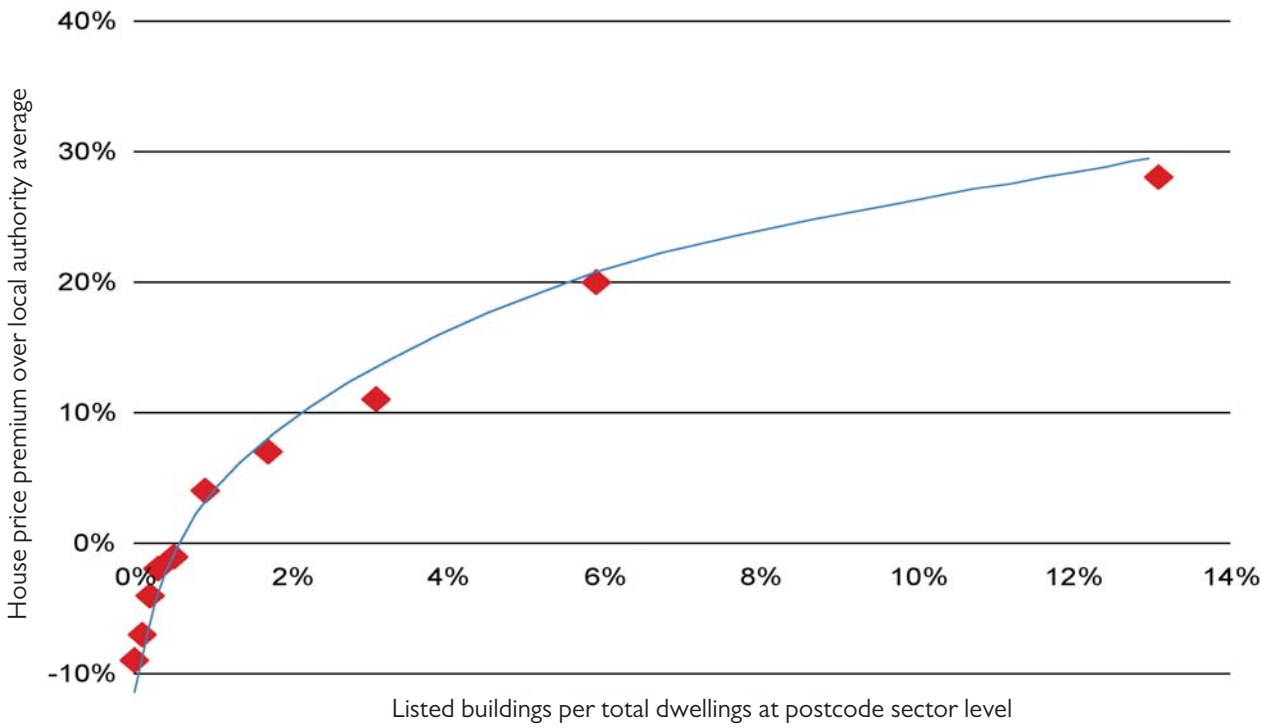
It is useful, therefore, to look at a different case study to see how built heritage can influence prices at a localised level within a single conurbation. For the purposes of this article, the city of Winchester would seem a reasonable example, not least because it is a city I know well and can comment upon with some confidence, as I live just five miles away.

Here within the postcode sector SO23 9–, which comprises the residential streets surrounding the cathedral and the district of St Cross, house prices are 32 per cent higher than the average for the city. The bulk of the properties are within a conservation-area designation and there is 1 listed building for each 10 houses.

Our analysis of the prime property market indicates that during the downturn, prices of property that can be described as best in class – by virtue of their location, setting, architectural appeal and standard of accommodation – were much less affected than the merely average or, even worse, blighted property. Whereas best in class had fallen by 11.8 per cent by April 2009, average properties had

witnessed price falls of 17.9 per cent. The same principle applies to prime areas, with agents in Winchester reporting that prices have suffered less in the high-value conservation areas of the city during the acute downturn of 2008 and the early part of 2009.

Perhaps, then, the time has come to talk more widely about the inherent value of conservation areas. While the designations in themselves do not create value, their role in protecting the character of an area is key to maintaining value. Conservation-area status may not be at the forefront of estates agents' marketing campaigns, but even they acknowledge the benefit of maintaining the quality of our built environment.



Throughout England there is a direct relationship between average local house prices and the percentage of listed properties in the building stock. © Savills (using Land Registry and English Heritage data)

Sustaining Local Value

Sustaining the cultural value of places is now recognised as a crucial aspect of planning and place-making – but how is it best done?

During the past 40 years a range of strategies and tools has been developed for the active management and enhancement of conservation areas. In this section David Stuart explains why conservation area appraisals are an important precursor to the effective management of conservation areas, while Jane Blackburn shows how the local community can be mobilised in active area management by carrying out the fieldwork for an ambitious character appraisal of 900 acres of Hampstead Garden Suburb.

In June 2009 English Heritage launched the results of the first-ever national survey of the condition of conservation areas. Catherine Dewar reviews the outcome and potential solutions, while Charles Wagner and Jenny Frew highlight strategies for managing and enhancing the public realm – the streets and open spaces which are an integral part of the character of all conservation areas. Florence Salberter from British Waterways examines the unique challenges of managing a network of linear conservation areas, and Steve Trow turns the spotlight on the role of conservation areas in protecting rural England.

Conservation area appraisals: approaches for the 21st century

David Stuart
Historic Areas Adviser, English Heritage

When the Civic Amenities Act 1967 introduced the idea that local authorities should be responsible for preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas it also highlighted another fundamental reality – that it is only by understanding the special architectural or historic interest of an area that its unique character can be effectively sustained. Conservation area appraisals have therefore evolved as a management tool to address this requirement.

To begin with, conservation area designation was often accompanied by only the simplest description of an area's historic character with little supporting analysis of its significance. Since then the evolution of a more broadly based approach to conservation area appraisal has provided planners with a range of much more sophisticated methodologies. Appraisals have moved on from being purely physical descriptions to analyses that focus on the significance of a conservation area for local people, and the dynamics and issues associated with its positive and pro-active management. This development has been incremental, influenced by both changes in planning practice and increasing public awareness and involvement in the management of the local environment. At the national level there have been similarly significant shifts in emphasis. Not only has the built heritage become a mainstream element of environmental policy, but there has also been a growing agreement among stakeholders about the importance of 'place' in the creation of sustainable communities.

For many years work on conservation area appraisal was considered something of a luxury by local authorities. As a consequence, planning applications and other forms of proposal affecting conservation areas prompted *ad hoc* and reactive assessments that focused on the specific issues that they generated at the time. Policy references to conservation areas in local plans were mostly generic. As a result, conservation areas became vulnerable to individual threats, especially from development pressure and legal challenges to the rationale for designation itself. For many years, a lack of standard guidance on conservation area appraisal coupled with limited local authority capacity and political interest meant that relatively few appraisals were actually completed. At the same time, the erosive effects of satellite dishes, replacement windows and insensitive highways improvements were all contributing to the loss of local character – a problem that was compounded by the difficulty conservation officers faced in gathering sufficient evidence to justify the removal of permitted development rights. By the 1980s the integrity of conservation areas, both as a concept and as individual places of value, was under serious threat. Fortunately, however, this crisis prompted a significant national and local shift in attitudes and approaches to the management of conservation areas.

For example, Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 introduced the new presumption that development should be determined in accordance with policies set out in statutory local plans, thus emphasising the importance of including conservation area policies in the local

West Dorset District Council has adopted a programme of conservation area appraisals the order and methodology of which is dictated by development pressure. Appraisals for conservation areas with defined development boundaries attract greater priority, will focus more on development-related issues, and help inform policy formulation in the Local Development Framework. © English Heritage

Characterisation projects in Cornwall informed conservation area appraisals and helped prove the case for multi-partner area grant schemes.
© Cornwall Council

plan. In turn, English Heritage's 1993 guidance on Conservation Area Practice explained for the first time what a definition of a conservation area's special architectural or historic interest should embrace. This initiative coincided with a more general realisation that the current situation of reactive appraisal work was no longer tenable; by the mid-1990s, the historic environment was accounting for around a fifth of planning public inquiries, a situation which the planning sector – and the public purse in particular – could not sustain.

While local authorities began to gear up their execution of conservation area appraisals, government started to place more emphasis on the role of communities in local decision-making. Conservation area designation and the production of their appraisals now involved much greater community participation through workshops and other pro-active exercises, which allowed a more comprehensive shared understanding of the management issues. From 1996, for example, the Countryside Commission encouraged the production of Village Design Statements to make sure that development in rural communities took proper account of local character and sense of place. A few years later, in 2000, the Rural White Paper underscored the role of Parish Plans and the Market Towns Initiative in identifying, with the support of the community, how locally distinctive character and features could best be preserved and form the basis of regeneration frameworks.

As the new millennium unfolded, other organisations added to the portfolio of historic area information and guidance that was available to local authorities as they set about the task of appraising their conservation areas and balancing the many competing interpretations and values which affected them. By this time the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) had also come into being, and much of its early advice found a natural resonance with conservation areas and their management. Of particular relevance is the guidance produced jointly with English Heritage on tall buildings, new buildings in historic contexts, and on establishing the significance of views. In parallel, the Heritage Lottery Fund produced its own guidance on the conservation area appraisals and management plans that it expected to see accompanying bids for grants from its Townscape Heritage Initiative.

Over this same period English Heritage introduced the concept of characterisation to widen the scope of appraisal methodology, as well as updating and expanding its 1993 guidance on conservation area appraisals and management plans (see Dewar, pp 26–8). Its Streets for All initiative (see Wagner and Frew, pp 32–5) has also promoted the importance of historic street character to the management of highways and the enhancement of the public realm.

Within the statutory planning system, the new regime of Local Development Frameworks (LDF) requires planning policies to be based firmly on evidence and for communities to be actively involved in their formulation. This further emphasises the need for conservation area appraisals and the direct involvement of the local population in drafting the management plans that flow from them – documents that can in turn be attached to the LDF as influential Supplementary Planning Documents.

The challenge in preparing any conservation area appraisal is to ensure that it embraces sufficient aspects and detail of historic character to satisfy its objective as a management tool. As well as defining the character of an area, an effective appraisal needs to identify the pressures it is facing and the best ways of responding to these. In recent years it has also become apparent that a one-size-fits-all appraisal format is rarely appropriate for the complicated historic, social and economic realities of individual conservation areas. The vital thing now is to share the lessons from these different experiences and work together to evolve an even better appraisal framework for the future. ■

Conservation areas survey: delivering solutions

Catherine Dewar
Historic Areas Adviser, English Heritage North-East Region

Conservation areas are part of our everyday landscape. Most of us either live or work in, visit or pass through a conservation area on a daily basis. They are part of the cherished local scene: but what condition are they in?

More than 40 years after their inception, English Heritage has undertaken the first national survey of the condition of the 9,300 conservation areas across England. In the autumn of 2008 English Heritage asked local authorities to complete a questionnaire that would provide a picture of the pressures that conservation areas face and how they are holding up against that pressure. While it is local authorities that have the overview and detailed knowledge of areas within their district, this survey would provide a national picture and comparisons. The response was fantastic: 75 per cent of local authorities completed surveys, and it is hoped to achieve a 100-per-cent coverage of conservation areas in England in the near future.

The survey is a management tool to help English Heritage, local authorities and local communities to prioritise resources, both time and money. As part of that process, the results were also used to inform a new Conservation Areas at Risk campaign to raise their profile and highlight where effort needs to go (**www.english-heritage.org. uk/conservationareas**).

English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Register has recently expanded to include other heritage designations as we move towards an integrated protection regime. For many years now, the Buildings at Risk Register has not only been a useful tool for raising awareness of the condition of listed buildings but has also proved to be a positive management tool in prioritising action. Following the addition of scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and protected wrecks, the inclusion of conservation areas on the register will help to raise their profile, particularly among those who are not as aware of the issues as those of us working in the heritage sector. But it is not without its challenges.

Defining risk is a more complex process when dealing with historic areas than it is when considering individual sites: a wide variety of factors can threaten the character or appearance of a conservation area. The obvious pressures come from neglected buildings or loss of historic detailing, such as timber sash windows or chimney-stacks. However, conservation areas are much more than just collections of buildings. They are dynamic places in which the combination of buildings,

Caroline Street, Birmingham. The manufacture of jewellery and small metal-ware in Birmingham not only shaped the historic development of the area but also contributes an integral part of its character today. Planning policies are now in place to help protect the jewellery industry from further decline. © English Heritage

Berwick-upon-Tweed. Following the production of character appraisals, the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Advisory Group has provided advice to the council on management issues and a local Building Recording Group is creating accurate surveys of historic buildings in the town.

spaces, vegetation, archaeology, and even smells and sounds, all contribute towards the special character of the place. Particular pressures may put one conservation area at risk but could be accommodated comfortably within another, depending on the special characteristics and circumstances of each. For some areas, the decline of land uses that are fundamental to the character of an area can be a significant loss, such as jewellery and small metalware manufacturing in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter or the fishing industry in coastal ports.

This really emphasises the importance of understanding the distinctiveness of each and every conservation area – what is it that gives it its special character, what condition is it in, and what pressures is it facing? The answers to these questions are best acquired through a form of survey known as 'character appraisal' (see Joanna Smith, pp 15–17) and with regard to the values set out in *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage 2008).

This is the first time that a national survey has been attempted and it has been a challenge to design a process that generates robust data in a quick and easy-to-use format that covers as many of the country's conservation areas as possible. Lessons learnt from the first year's survey is already allowing English Heritage to refine the process so that the 2010 register can provide everyone responsible for managing conservation areas with the reliable and easily accessible information they need.

A key message of the campaign was that it is not just local planning authorities that are responsible for the management of conservation areas – and in this respect, the campaign was certainly not a 'naming and shaming' of councils across the country, despite some of the coverage it received in the media. Anyone who lives or works in, or visits conservation areas also has a duty to help look after them, and one of English Heritage's priorities is to raise awareness of the role that local communities can play in their management. Similarly, conservation areas are a matter for the whole of the local council to consider, not just the Conservation Officer and Planning Department. For example, good management of highways and open spaces is just as important as the maintenance of historic buildings and structures.

So, how can the survey and the Conservation Areas at Risk campaign help to deliver solutions? Once the pressures on conservation areas are properly understood, it becomes much easier for everyone to target effort and resources where they are most needed. As a follow-up to the campaign English Heritage is therefore working on a programme of projects that will help with the practical management of conservation areas – not least by making sure that local communities and councils have clear guidance about the various legal and planning 'tools' that are currently available to them.

Most notable is a reviewed and amended model for the English Heritage Partnership Schemes in conservation areas. This grant scheme was working well in most cases but previous recipients have identified a number of ways in which it could be made more responsive to the needs of local authorities and owners, and consequently to the benefit of conservation areas. For example, the amended scheme has removed the minimum requirement for at least 40 per cent of funding to be targeted at architectural reinstatement. English Heritage has also introduced the freedom, in exceptional cases, to roll over up to 20 per cent of funds to the following year's budget. The schemes must still have an emphasis on quality – the involvement of a conservation-accredited architect is thus still necessary for certain individual projects – but English Heritage now endorses the commissioning of an accredited architect to the scheme as a whole, who is then available to provide advice to building owners as and when required.

As part of the Conservation Areas at Risk campaign, English Heritage also produced a publication explaining how local amenity societies and

interest groups can build partnerships with councils and help in managing areas. Some councils have already set up Conservation Area Advisory/ Management Groups involving local associations and council representatives and we hope others will follow this constructive lead.

Partnership is a word which crops up again and again in heritage circles, sometimes to the point of becoming a management cliché. In the case of conservation areas, however, partnership working offers a genuinely powerful way of understanding different perspectives, avoiding blame, and moving constructively towards a shared goal of a better-managed local environment.

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Heritage waterways: managing linear conservation areas

Florence Salberter

Heritage Adviser, British Waterways

British Waterways (BW) is the principal inland navigation authority for England, Scotland and Wales. It was established by an Act of Parliament in 1962 and is a public corporation that manages 2,200 miles of canals and river navigations. It welcomes 11 million visitors a year and has 32,000 licensed boaters on its books. It operates commercially and derives its income from a mixture of sources, including a government grant.

The waterways: a valued national asset

Half the population of Britain lives within five miles of a BW canal or river and BW's waterways provide many benefits to the nation. The network represents different activities for different users: a way of life, a convenient commuting route, a business or development opportunity; the restoration of industrial canal sites contributes significantly to the regeneration of inner-city areas. Each activity has its own requirements and each user their own expectations, but all make use of a historic and functioning waterway network that is more than 200 years old. Local authorities and regional development agencies have come to appreciate the wide range of benefits a waterway corridor can deliver to their constituents and seek ways of protecting and enhancing it with local designations. Beyond the planning system further protection is afforded by extensive environmental legislation, including SSSI designation.

The BW historic estate comprises numerous heritage assets. To assist its heritage management role BW has a number of internal heritage policies and standards, a GIS designations database and a team of dedicated heritage advisers who work across the BW network. These people have a busy job to do; along with considerable numbers of non-designated historic structures BW is responsible for the largest estate of listed buildings (currently 2,756) in Britain after the National Trust and the Church of England. It also cares for 99 scheduled monuments and is affected by 300 conservation areas, comprising up to 383 miles in linear waterway terms.

Conservation area designation: some considerations

The number of conservation areas increases year on year; by 2008 they covered 13 per cent of the BW network, with the greatest concentration in the Midlands. Two types of conservation area affect BW: those that focus entirely on a canal corridor, and those that include a small section of canal within a wider context. Waterway-focused linear conservation areas, such as the Leeds and Liverpool Canal or the Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Areas, account for 5 per cent of all the conservation areas affecting BW.

Designating a conservation area is not an end in itself – it is important for the authority to

The Foxton flight of locks in rural Leicestershire. This important structure is designated as a conservation area and a management agreement has recently been developed for the site. © British Waterways

Liverpool World Heritage Site. A new canal recently opened at the side of the Grade II* Port of Liverpool building links the Leeds & Liverpool Canal to Albert Dock (Grade I). © British Waterways

clearly identify and communicate what it is trying to protect. Character appraisals (or statements), management plans, and specific design policies are useful tools in protecting the value of the designation. In 2008 only 35 per cent of waterway conservation areas had a character appraisal, although this was a large increase compared to the 11 per cent of five years ago, an increase that is probably due to the introduction in 2005–6 of the Best Value Performance Indicator for local authorities and the guidance documents produced by English Heritage in 2006.

Historic research, map regression and a record of features of interest provide an excellent basis for a thorough understanding of the historic context of the conservation area but are not in themselves sufficient to gauge the intangible character and special value of a waterway to its users and the local community. Engaging from the outset with BW, as the main landowner, and informed groups such as canal societies, local history and archaeology associations and the Inland Waterways Association can greatly benefit the long-term management of a conservation area. Early consultation with these parties can be very productive, allowing an opportunity to exchange best-practice and gain an understanding of the wider context of the area to be designated. In recent years BW has been working with English Heritage and a number of local authorities to develop heritage management (formerly partnership) agreements as a working tool for effective on-the-ground management and maintenance of designated heritage assets, including conservation areas.

Case study 1: the Greater Manchester Canals Heritage Management Agreement

The Greater Manchester Canals Heritage Management Agreement (HMA) is being developed in anticipation of the legislative changes under the Heritage Protection Bill by Andrew Tegg, heritage adviser for BW's North-West Waterways. The major benefit of this HMA is that it will constitute an integrated management tool that crosses over authorities' boundaries to embrace a network of canals. In this case the partners involved are: British Waterways (the main landowner), English Heritage, the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit and eight different local councils.

The HMA draws upon existing BW heritage policy and standards. Each category of works is agreed by the partners and the agreement establishes whether the works need statutory consent, clearance or are permitted works requiring neither. By this means the HMA will remove uncertainties and will increase understanding and accountability. The agreement is intended to last initially for a period of five years and includes a systematic recording system.

Other HMAs being piloted by BW include those for Foxton Locks in Leicestershire, the Pocklington Canal in Yorkshire and the Lancaster Canal in Lancashire and Cumbria. Shorter versions for single structures, like the Goyt Aqueduct in Derbyshire, are also under development.

Case study 2: heritage recording on the Worcester & Birmingham Canal

BW holds the data of the Architectural Heritage Survey that was conducted in partnership with English Heritage in the 1980s and 1990s as part of a thematic listing survey. Such records contain data that is useful to BW for the day-to-day management of its estate and to help identify artefacts of interest just outside BW's boundaries. In 2007 a pilot project was started on the Worcester & Birmingham Canal enlisting volunteers from the local canal society to update and complement the old Architectural Heritage Survey data using a revised record sheet and a digital camera.

There is immense potential in updating or creating such records using modern technology (in particular GIS) as the gathered data could be searched and shared to contribute to conservation area character appraisals, statements of significance and heritage management plans. Gathering the data does require extensive resources, but BW is seeking to increase its capacity by enrolling

volunteers, many of whom have a lifelong passion for waterways heritage, to help.

Case study 3: policy documents

The Town and Country Planning Association has recently published a Policy Advice Note, *Inland Waterways – Unlocking the Potential and Securing the Future of Inland Waterways through the Planning System* (TCPA 2009), which demonstrates how policies can be developed with the support from BW and how local authorities can take an active role in the waterways' regeneration. It urges a more joined-up approach to realising their contribution to regeneration, mitigating the impact of climate change and providing sustainable transport corridors.

Conclusion

The majority of inland waterways benefit from being under the care of one publicly owned landowner that has a duty of care towards its historic assets and strict internal procedures to ensure legal compliance.

BW recognises conservation area designation as a powerful management and strategic tool. Appropriate research, the active involvement of stakeholders and the publication of supporting material represent crucial stages in designation that, if ignored, can undermine the value and purpose of a conservation area. It is important to get these right, understand how they relate to policies and other designations, and to recognise the extensive resources they require.

Design guidance and policies for contextual waterside development, management agreements and waterscape strategies are some of the tools that can complement conservation area designation. BW can contribute skills to develop pro-active tools in partnership with English Heritage, local authorities and committed volunteers, and is keen to do so.

For further information about British Waterways visit: **www.britishwaterways.co.uk**

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Rural conservation areas: conserving the historic countryside

Steve Trow

Head of Rural and Environmental Policy, English Heritage

Although conservation areas have routinely been described as a means of protecting 'townscape' (see Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, paragraph 4.2) they also have an important role to play in conserving and enhancing the character of England's countryside. Analysis using the government's latest rural and urban definition (CRC 2007) together with information currently available to English Heritage on the location of conservation areas shows that, while 43 per cent of conservation areas in England fall within towns with a population greater than 10,000 people, 16 per cent are situated in smaller towns or the urban fringe and 41 per cent in villages, hamlets and the open countryside.

Unsurprisingly, the great majority of conservation areas in the countryside are focused on the historic cores of its settlements. As a result, they provide an important tool – arguably the principal tool – for protecting the character of what are conventionally considered to be the archetypes of rural England: the market place, the village green, the churchyard and so on. In addition to protecting the historic character of these settlements, however, designation offers protection to the wider landscape and a significant proportion of conservation areas are designated for this purpose. Protection in this case is primarily achieved through the designation of discrete historic features situated in the open countryside that, by virtue either of their extent, their management requirements or their significance, do not lend themselves to other, more intensive or nationally determined, categories of heritage designation. Good examples of this type of designation include historic railways, such as the Settle to Carlisle line, or historic waterways (see article by Florence Salberter, pp 28–30).

Generally, conservation area designation is not regarded as appropriate for the protection of extensive landscapes but, in a limited number of cases, local authorities have chosen to use it to protect large areas. For example, some have designated historic parks or gardens as conservation areas where they have seen a need to provide protection additional to that conferred by inclusion in the English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England* (see article by Jenifer White, pp 19–21). Rather more radically, designation of entire valleys has been used

Gunnerside, part of the extensive Upper Swaledale and Arkengarthdale conservation area in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Designation of the conservation area confirmed the significance of the barns and walls, and the landscape attracted grant-aid from a variety of sources.

in the Yorkshire Dales National Park to confirm the significance of its most iconic field-barn and drystone-wall landscapes. In 1989, for example, an area of 71 square kilometres in Upper Swaledale and Arkengarthdale was designated as a conservation area, within which there are hundreds of kilometres of distinctive drystone walling, 133 listed buildings and 1,442 traditional farm buildings, including more than 1,000 field barns (White and Darlington, 2004). In this case, designation has been used in a context where 90 per cent of the historic buildings that characterised the area were located outside its villages and hamlets and where most were not listed; where scheduling would have imposed excessive controls for such a large area; and where National Park designation alone was failing to halt decline. This innovative designation was followed in 1994 by a second extensive conservation area designation in Littondale. While these two valley-wide designations have occasionally resulted in refusals of Conservation Area Consent to demolish distinctive buildings, their principal contribution to protecting local historic character has been to draw attention to the significance of these landscapes and the pressures on them and to successfully attract investment from a variety of sources. This has included Town, Conservation Area Partnership, and Historic Environment Regeneration Scheme grant-aid in partnership with English Heritage; local authority, Countryside Commission and National Park funding; EU structural funding; and, most significantly, funding through the Environmentally Sensitive Area agri-environment scheme. Together, this investment has ensured the repair and re-use of a significant number of buildings that would otherwise have become derelict (English Heritage/Defra 2007).

Against this very varied history of past designation practice, is it possible to draw any conclusions about the effectiveness of conservation areas in the countryside and to identify any specifically rural challenges for the future?

Newly available evidence from the 2009 Heritage at Risk Survey (English Heritage 2009a) suggests that rural conservation areas are actually performing rather better than their urban counterparts. Provisional analysis of heritage at risk data suggests that while 15 per cent of urban conservation areas are considered to have experienced some degree of deterioration in the last three years and 12 per cent some degree of improvement, the equivalent figures for rural conservation areas are 6 per cent deteriorating and 10 per cent improving. Rural conservation areas are, however, only marginally better served in the provision of character appraisals, with 55 per cent either completed or in preparation, in contrast to 51 per cent in urban areas.

Notwithstanding these generally lower rates of risk, it is arguable that the pressures on rural conser-

vation areas are broadly similar to those in the urban environment and the solutions to reducing risk are broadly the same – that is, ensuring that each conservation area has a character appraisal and that Article 4 Directions are being used where they can make a difference. In addition, however, it is possible to identify the following challenges that are specific to the countryside.

First, as community engagement is vital to securing the protection and enhancement of conservation areas there would appear to be great, but often still untapped, potential for forging better links to the enthusiasm in many rural communities for developing village design statements and parish plans. English Heritage will be considering this further in coming months.

Secondly, in many rural areas the most pressing need is to enhance the provision of affordable housing, without which rural communities will lose their vitality and, arguably, character. It is important, therefore, that conservation areas should not be seen as 'no-go' areas in terms of the delivery of social housing schemes. Instead effort should be directed to ensuring that schemes are sufficiently well designed and contextually literate to be successfully integrated within sensitive historic settlements and English Heritage has recently issued guidance intended to promote this (English Heritage 2009b).

Thirdly, while many conservation areas are successfully conserving and enhancing the historic character of the larger nucleated rural settlements, we still need to consider how to better protect the character of those extensive areas of England typified by settlement patterns of dispersed hamlet, farmstead and farm building. In the future, local-authority resources are unlikely to be available to support the designation, appraisal and monitoring of multiple hamlet-scale designations or of the type of extensive designations attempted in the Yorkshire Dales. Alternative approaches based on characterisation and planning policies are likely to play an equally important role and further work is required to develop such an approach.

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Further downstream on the River Swale, the historic centre of Richmond provides an example of a more conventional rural conservation area, but one that has also successfully attracted regeneration funding and was awarded the Academy of Urbanism's *Great Town of the Year Award 2008*. © Catherine Dewar, English Heritage

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Streets for All: enhancing the public realm

Charles Wagner, *Head of Planning and Regeneration Policy, English Heritage*

Jenny Frew, *Senior Policy Adviser Transport and Streets, English Heritage*

The degradation of the streets and spaces between buildings is at or near the top of the list of every survey of problems affecting conservation areas. Though the local planning authority designates the conservation area, and can control development, issue design guidance and even take away permitted development rights to bring them under development control, they have little influence over those who manage the spaces between buildings. Often the people responsible – the highway authority and the environmental services – are in different departments to planning, or even in a different authority in the case of 'two-tier' local authorities. Traditionally, their agenda has been in conflict with that of those managing the

conservation area: improving the traffic flow, road safety and litter management.

But in the last ten years, there has been a revolution in thinking with the realisation that improved public spaces in town and city centres lead to improved environments that encourage those visiting, living and working there to use and enjoy walking around the area. English Heritage has been a participant in this new thinking since 1999 with its *Streets for All* publication (**www.helm.org.uk/streetsforall**).

English Heritage's *Conservation Areas at Risk* campaign will ensure that the *Streets for All* message is taken further. A survey of local authorities in advance of the campaign suggested that 45 per cent of conservation areas are detrimentally affected by street clutter and 60 per cent have poorly maintained roads and pavements. Consultation with estate agents showed that the state of the street and public space also has an effect on house prices and saleability, with the quality of highways and paving being a particular concern. To make a real difference to the state of the 9,300 conservation areas it is therefore essential that all the local council's departments are committed to protecting or enhancing the character and appearance of the area. Local authorities can help achieve this by developing a management plan for each conservation area that includes policies for streetscape, highways, landscape and public spaces. The guidance in *Streets for All* can be used to ensure the streetscape is managed in an integrated way with multidisciplinary teams working across local authority departments.

Much of the progress made in the public realm has been possible because of the growing willingness among planners, architects, urban designers and local groups to question the approach being taken to streets and spaces by many highways engineers and technicians. The 'place-making' agenda, led by the Department for Communities and Local Government, has influenced the work of the Department of Transport, and gradually local-authority highways departments and consultancies. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and CABE Space have played a major role in this, raising design standards and providing urban-design training for highways and traffic engineers and technicians.

There is now a consensus of opinion that the way to engage highways engineers and technicians is by encouraging them to participate in the new approach. There are three ways of achieving this: good quality guidance supported by effective training; interdisciplinary working; and leadership from senior local-authority officers and members.

The Department for Transport's flagship guidance, *Manual for Streets*, aims to bring all professionals together in creating successful streets. It has had some success already, but needs to be followed up by a comprehensive programme of training and awareness-raising to embed the principles in all local authorities. The companion *Manual for High Streets*, currently being drafted, will extend these principles to non-residential streets.

Progress is being made in bringing different disciplines together. For example, in 2006 the Public Realm Information and Advice Network (PRIAN) (**www.publicrealm.info**) was set up as a free advice point for new ideas. With the support of English Heritage, CABE, the Institution of Highways and Transportation and the Institute of

Streets for All

English Heritage was at the forefront of improving street design with its *Streets for All* publications and *Save our Streets* campaign. The initial message in the *Streets for All: A Guide to the Management of London Streets* (2000) is still the same today: much can be achieved within existing legislation and guidance to ensure attractive, safe and clutter-free streets and spaces. In 2005, editions of *Streets for All* covering the eight other English regions showed how the approach can be applied in a way that respects local distinctiveness and regional character.

Feedback from training events suggested a demand for more detailed technical guidance. This led to the publication of 10 practical case studies, which show practitioners how to deal with common issues such as *Fixing Signs, Lights and CCTV to Buildings*, *Traffic Calming*, *Tactile Paving* and *How to Do a Street Audit*.

Highway Incorporated Engineers it also runs twice-yearly courses for highways and urban design leading to the Professional Certificate in the Design and Management of the Public Realm.

Reaching local authority members and senior officers is also essential for ensuring good interdisciplinary working. Leaders who understand the wider benefits of improving streets and public spaces can help to structure local authorities to bring different teams together and reduce 'silo' working.

Most of the building blocks are therefore in

Buxton Case Study

Buxton is characterised by its Georgian and Victorian spa town architecture and has been regenerated over the last 20 years with much assistance from English Heritage. The local authority, High Peak Borough Council, has put together a Design and Place Making Strategy to guide developers on Buxton's special qualities and ways in which these could be protected and enhanced (**www.highpeak.gov.uk/planning/design/BuxtonCrescent.asp**).

Considerable value was placed on working closely with the local community in the preparation of the strategy. An 'enquiry by design' approach was adopted using the consultant urban designers, Gillespies, to facilitate a series of workshops attended by invited representatives of the local community and other stakeholders. Before the strategy is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document all parties attending the workshops will be expected to sign up to an agreed design vision and framework that confirms the full weight of the community's support for the following eight principles:

Character Reinforce the distinct identity of the town centre

Continuity and Enclosure Create streets and public spaces that are coherently and attractively defined

A Quality Public Realm Create public spaces that are safe, comfortable, well maintained, welcoming and accessible to everyone

Ease of Movement Make the town centre easy to get to and move around in, particularly for pedestrians

Legibility Create a town centre that both residents and visitors can understand and find their way around

Adaptability Create a town centre that can adapt to change

Diversity Create a town centre with variety and choice

Sustainability Create a social, economic and environmentally sustainable town centre for the future

Buxton Market Place in 1899, when the public realm could be easily appreciated, from a postcard in the English Heritage National Monuments Record.

place to improve the quality of streets and thereby help address one of the main risks to conservation areas. Innovative, balanced and well-researched guidance, in the form of *Manual for Streets,* has set the standard for local authorities to follow. The next steps are for government to help embed this approach within local authorities, and for authorities and their staff to make sure that they are working together to get the most effective results. One important strand is for local authorities to involve communities in deciding how to improve their settlement's appearance (see the Buxton Case Study). English Heritage will continue to provide advice and guidance to local authorities and others about the best way of managing conservation areas and making our streets and public spaces better places for everybody.

Hampstead Garden Suburb: a novel approach to character appraisal

Jane Blackburn
Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Manager

Hampstead Garden Suburb, in the London borough of Barnet, was founded in 1907 as a social and architectural experiment. It was designed to accommodate a variety of social classes living as a community in well-designed houses attractively grouped at low density, surrounded by gardens that were bounded by hedges, and with access to a variety of open spaces. The conservation area is unusually large at about 364 hectares (900 acres), with more than 5,000 properties and a population of some 16,000.

The suburb is now a highly valued residential area within 8 km (5 miles) of London's West End and thus subject to immense development pressures. None the less it is recognised by English Heritage as 'perhaps one of the most well-known – and well-maintained – conservation areas in the country' (press release, 22 June 2009). The continued significance and quality of the suburb is due to the parallel legislative protection of the Town and Country Planning Acts, administered by the London borough of Barnet, and a mandatory Scheme of Management under the Leasehold Reform Acts, operated by the residual freeholder the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, both with the support of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association.

Paradoxically the suburb's size and importance had proved a daunting obstacle to undertaking a character appraisal. Furthermore the design guidance that had been adopted in 1994 by both the local authority and the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust was in need of updating. The solution to both issues, put forward by the trust in June 2005, was to

Hampstead Garden Suburb: local volunteers have played a vital part in shaping the future management of the conservation area.

Hampstead Garden Suburb: one of the best-known – and well-maintained – conservation areas in the country.

adapt the model of village and town design statements by using residents, co-ordinated by the trust, to undertake the appraisal fieldwork and the first draft of the text, maps and photographs. The borough of Barnet accepted this proposal and volunteers were recruited by the trust in October 2006. A steering committee with representatives of English Heritage, the borough and the trust, chaired by Andrew Harper – a ward councillor – was established in May 2007.

The resultant documents are currently going through Barnet's consultation processes in readiness for adoption by both the borough and the trust. All concerned are very pleased with the high standard and special qualities of the finished documents. English Heritage has noted the combination of rigorous and consistent standards of observation and recording with the authentically individual voices of nearly 60 residents. Residents have enjoyed and learnt from the process, a benefit in its own right; for example: 'It confirmed the fact that I love the suburb and that it is worthwhile spending time walking around it. I always notice something new.'

This process, however, was neither an easy option nor a short cut, although for smaller and less-varied conservation areas the time-scale should be much reduced. The following essential ingredients are proposed, with observations, for adoption by anyone considering this approach:

- **Consistent and sustained commitment from all concerned**: in the case of Barnet, for example, there was input at many levels, from the council's mapping technicians through the planning officers to Councillor Harper.
- **A clear framework for the process and documentation**: English Heritage guidance was adapted to the special circumstances of the suburb. The steering committee kept the process on track, monitoring progress and resources.
- **Appropriate guidance**: the trust put its expertise into the initial division of the suburb into 16 character areas and 5 separate open spaces. The detailed understanding and professional overview of the trust's architectural adviser, David Davidson, was deployed throughout the process.
- **Support for volunteers**: the lead volunteer, Judith Chaney, spent the entire period of volunteer involvement providing encouragement, support and editing down the wealth of material. The trust prepared background briefings, led guided walks and held discussion sessions for the volunteers for each area in preparation for the work they were to undertake. Graduate interns assisted; even so the load on the trust's key member of staff and the lead volunteer was considerable.
- **Explanation to the wider community**: initial suspicion among some residents was allayed by holding a series of public exhibitions about the suburb and by regular articles in local publications, the *Suburb News* and the *Trust Gazette*.
- **Future commitment**: both Barnet and the trust will need to regularly review the electronic and printed documents.

This approach has delivered an authoritative result with a distinctive local voice; it blends the expert, dispassionate approach of planning professionals with the common sense and committed understanding of long-term residents. It has been a lengthy, rigorous but engaging and rewarding process, befitting the history, ethos and status of the suburb.

Catalysts For The Future

Conservation areas have a crucial role to play in the regeneration of our towns, cities and rural areas – and also for meeting the challenges of climate change.

Because they are rooted in the past, conservation areas can provide the focus around which community regeneration can take place. It is a common misconception that conservation areas just protect affluent neighbourhoods. In the South-East, for instance, half of all conservation areas are in the top 50 per cent of the region's most deprived areas.

Seaside towns are a particular hotspot and a government priority for action. The recent Sea Change initiative has channelled £45 million into run-down seaside towns. Andy Brown celebrates Margate and its potential for culturally led regeneration through an innovative partnership between the creative arts and heritage sectors.

Will Holborow reflects on the lessons learned from the disposal of entire historic areas on the Ministry of Defence estate, while Simon Baynham demonstrates how enlightened estate management fostered the revitalisation of Marylebone High Street into a national success story.

Case studies of the North-West region and central London by Henry Owen-John and Paddy Pugh demonstrate how even the most challenging areas can be reinvented by vision – vision by the local authority, vision by the developer and vision by English Heritage; the ability to see how redundant or derelict areas can provide the catalyst for the regeneration of entire neighbourhoods such as Ancoats in Liverpool or King's Cross in London.

Reusing our existing building stock makes sound environmental sense too. About 80 per cent of the buildings we will be using in 30 years' time exist today. With the spectre of climate change, and the need to maximise the use of existing resources and the embodied energy they contain, responsible stewardship is essential. We must ensure that buildings are well maintained, reusable and flexible to future needs. Chris Wood explains how simple measures to upgrade our existing houses can be carried out without destroying their character and still deliver major carbon savings.

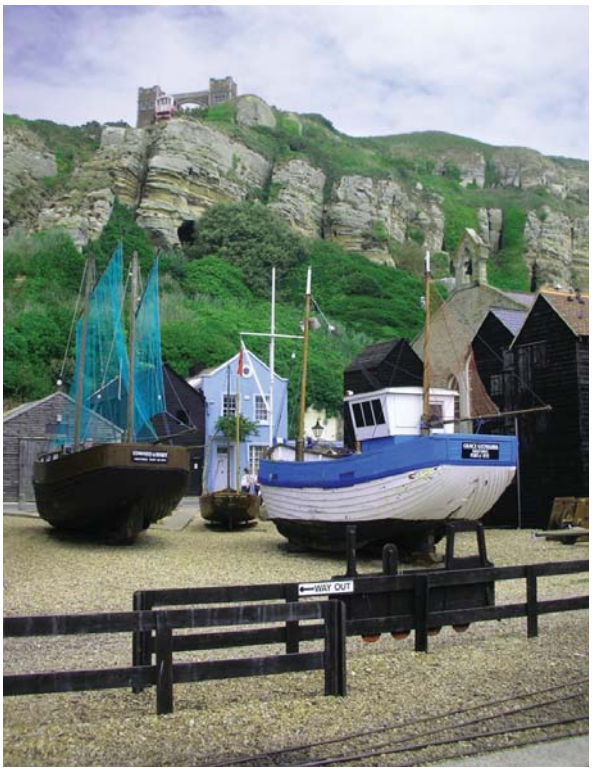
A creative future for seaside resorts: Margate, Turner and beyond

Andy Brown

Planning and Development Regional Director, English Heritage South-East Region

England's seaside resorts face a more hopeful future now than for many years. 'Staycationing' (holidaying in one's home country rather than abroad), whether for economic or for environmental reasons, appears to be adding to the increasing market for short-stay holidays at the seaside. The plight of many resorts has been acknowledged through the Communities and Local Government Select Committee Report on coastal towns, and the DCMS funding for coastal resorts through the 'Sea Change' bidding rounds has injected welcome investment.

The rich historic character of several of the South-East's former seaside resorts has been recognised as a vital component of their regeneration. In Hastings, for example, the distinctive 'net shops', in which the fishermen dried and maintained their nets, helps to differentiate Hastings from



Hastings, East Sussex: the distinctive 'net shops', in which the fishermen dried and maintained their nets, help to give this historic seaside town its own special character. © Andrew Brown

competitors when potential visitors are choosing where to holiday. Ramsgate has established a distinctive identity through its magnificent historic harbour area.

A characterful environment enriches the quality of the holiday-makers' visits. Ryde, on the Isle of Wight, which had the unusual distinction of being a winter resort because of its mild climate, has invested in its heritage of shops and arcades to offer visitors and residents alike an interesting shopping experience. Following on from the exemplary Seafront Development Initiative at Brighton, Worthing's regeneration plans centre on improving its seafront public realm to support and reinvigorate the many historic assets there, including the Dome Cinema (Grade II*) and pier.

There is often an affinity for former seaside resorts, with their tradition of bohemian lifestyles, among artistic communities. Bungalow Town at Shoreham-by-Sea was popularised after Marie Loftus, 'the Sarah Bernhardt of the Music Halls', set up home there in a converted railway carriage. Her friends had bungalows built, creating a thriving artistic centre, and for a while after the First World War Shoreham Beach was the home of British film-making. Folkestone's Tontine Street, a Victorian development of shops, has become the focus of an artistic community that is successfully diversifying the local economy.

Margate, arguably the original mass-market seaside resort, is on the verge of a breakthrough in the way its heritage of buildings, spaces and associations contribute to its regeneration. Over the next three years, Margate expects to transform itself from the location for the proverbial wet weekend to a destination worthy of its proud past.

Margate's flagship project is the Turner Contemporary Gallery, designed by David Chipperfield Architects, which draws on the town's association with the artist J M W Turner (1755–1851), who was a regular visitor throughout his life. One of the town's best-kept secrets, however, is the remarkable quality of its Old Town. Investment in recent years, thanks in large part to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiative and EU funding streams, has reversed the post-Second World War under-investment in both buildings and the public realm. As a result, Margate Old Town provides a distinctive character that works in tandem with the modernity offered by the Turner Contemporary Gallery as a 'something old, something new' destination.

Once in Margate itself, the story of the resort is captivating, although currently told rather too traditionally in a series of interpretive boards. The fashion for sea-bathing and all the rituals of social life around it are manifest in the buildings and squares. The enigmatic Shell Grotto and the town's ultra-traditional museum are currently accessible to interested visitors, but much of Margate's characterful historic environment, ranging from the fine Maxwell Fry station of 1926 at the western end of the town to the former lido at the eastern end, remains under-exploited.

Margate's Old Town – one of this traditional seaside resort's best-kept secrets and a vital key to its regeneration through a combination of culture and heritage.
© Andrew Brown

The inspiration of Turner and the creative programme being delivered as part of the Turner Contemporary Gallery project has already nurtured a creative community in Margate that is taking advantage not only of the legendary light but also the towns's affordable accommodation. Public art enlivens the historic streets, and projects such as Artangel's *Margate Exodus*, including the burning of Anthony Gormley's *Waste Man*, have achieved international profile.

The opportunity exists in Margate to bring these three dimensions of regeneration together in a single integrated programme in which art, creativity and heritage combine in a new sustainable business model. With a bespoke Community Development Trust to broker solutions, the richness of character in the Old Town could be sustained by the use of upper floors and ancillary buildings as studio spaces. In return the tenants could be helped to keep on top of routine maintenance through an affordable service on the continental *Monumentenwacht* model. Improvements to the public realm, especially the lighting and signage that is needed in association with the Turner Contemporary Gallery, could enhance the Old

Town too. The potential of the collaboration between the creative and heritage communities to engage residents and visitors in the narrative of Margate is one of the most exciting prospects.

The rebirth of the Dreamland amusement park would compliment perfectly the Turner Contemporary in conserving the distinctive character of the place. In July the HLF awarded a development grant of £384,500 which may allow the flagship Grade II* listed cinema to become the gateway to the world's first amusement park exclusively of historic rides. Designed by Iles, Leathart and Granger in 1935, the style was used by the Odeon company from 1936 onwards. At the time of writing, a decision is awaited on the application to the Sea Change funding programme for a substantial investment in this project.'

English Heritage, Arts Council England and Thanet Council are finalising how to take this innovative programme forward so that the cultural ecology is fit for the opening of the Turner Contemporary Gallery in 2011. If successful, this model of symbiosis between creativity and heritage can be exported to similarly challenging seaside resorts. The benefits of investing in the character of historic seaside resorts will then be seen in the context of the government's vision for Creative Britain as further evidence of the relevance of the historic environment to our future economic prosperity.

The redevelopment of Dreamland will reinstate popular seaside creativity and heritage in its true home, at the heart of Margate. © Andrew Brown

Bringing redundant government sites back to life

Will Holborow
Head of Government Historic Estates Unit, English Heritage

The past 30 years have witnessed an unprecedented sale of surplus heritage sites from the central government estate. This process is by no means at an end as there are numerous sites that are still in the process of disposal. This article focuses on former military sites and mental hospitals, which tend to be large in scale, often encompassing extensive groups of buildings that have a distinctive institutional character. It offers an overview of the disposal and regeneration process, and how the various parties involved can work together to achieve a successful outcome.

Background

Since the early 1980s, changes in defence policy have resulted in the closure of numerous military establishments, including naval bases, barracks, research facilities and RAF airfields. Areas that have been shaped by their military past, such as Aldershot, Chatham, Colchester, Gosport, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Woolwich, have had to adjust to this contraction of the Ministry of Defence estate by planning for new civilian uses. There has been a comparable contraction of the National Health Service historic estate throughout England, with the disposal of older hospitals. The policy of 'Care in the Community' resulted in the closure of almost all the traditional Victorian mental asylums during the 1980s and 1990s. Many former government buildings have a distinctive historic or architectural character and are protected by listing. Some sites have been designated as conservation areas or included in English Heritage's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

In exceptional cases, the government has used public endowments to support the transfer of nationally important heritage sites to charitable trusts, beginning with Chatham Historic Dockyard and Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust in the 1980s and followed in the 1990s by Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills Trust, the Somerset House Trust, and the Greenwich Foundation for the Royal Naval College. However, the great majority of disposal sites have been sold on the open market for commercial development.

Government policy is to obtain best value from disposals, taking into account public and community benefits as well as the financial return to

the taxpayer. In exceptional cases, ministers have backed the sale of historic buildings at below full market value where there is an identifiable benefit involved, as in the sale of the Royal Army Medical College on Millbank in London to Chelsea College of Art.

Protection

Many disposal sites include individually listed buildings or scheduled monuments. A small but significant proportion of sites have some form of area protection as well. For example, of the former 96 hospital sites transferred to English Partnerships (now part of the Homes and Communities Agency) in 2005, 4 were on English Heritage's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens and 5 were protected as conservation areas. Several former military airfields are similarly protected as conservation areas.

Themes and issues

The viability of converting old government buildings to new uses has been demonstrated by countless examples around the country where historic buildings are the focus of successful new neighbourhoods. For example, in Gosport, Hampshire, there is an extensive mixed-use regeneration area that encompasses the ordnance buildings of Priddy's Hard and the navy victualling buildings of Royal Clarence Yard. Two adjoining groups of barrack buildings (St George Barracks, North and South) have been sympathetically converted to residential use. In some cases, historic buildings have been incorporated in new industrial parks – the former Royal Aircraft Establishment Factory Site at Farnborough being a notable and successful example.

The road to regeneration can be long and difficult. Local planning issues and downturns in the economy can cause considerable delays. Buildings on disposal sites have often been functionally redundant and neglected for years prior to sale; the backlog of repairs can be a deterrent to potential purchasers. Even after disposal, the planning process can take more than a decade to resolve in some cases. For example, Woolwich Arsenal, a 31-hectare (77-acre) site facing the Thames, retains 22 listed buildings and structures ranging in date from 1696 to 1856. In 1997 English Partnerships acquired it from the Ministry of Defence, with a £25 million dowry to fund decontamination and building repairs. The majority of the listed buildings have now been repaired and adapted for new uses, and development is proceeding in accordance with an agreed master-plan. Almost 2,000 new homes have been created, nearly half of the planned total.

Shoebury Garrison, Essex: the Officers' Terrace and other historic buildings on the site have been sympathetically converted to residential use following years of neglect.
© English Heritage

Lessons learnt

The following issues are crucial to securing a successful outcome in managing the transition of heritage sites from institutional ownership to the public realm.

First, the department involved must ensure that the disposal process is handled efficiently and sensitively, in accordance with official Department for Culture, Media and Sport guidance (DCMS 1999). The aim should be to avoid piecemeal development, which could leave heritage assets isolated, or a protracted period of vacancy, which is likely to result in their decline. The method of sale needs to allow for the assessment of proposals made by

Chemistry laboratory (foreground) and Grand Store at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich; both now converted to residential use.
© Alan Johnson

Knowle Village, Fareham, Hampshire – the scale and materials of new development (foreground) are respectful of the retained historic buildings of this former mental hospital.

potential purchasers, to ensure that the heritage assets find sustainable new ownership.

Second, there needs to be clarity and consensus in the planning process. This is usually articulated through a planning brief, master-plan or supplementary planning document. These strategic documents may need to be supported by more detailed studies such as conservation management plans. A good relationship between the department, the local planning authority and stakeholders such as English Heritage is critical. Active engagement of the local community and other interest groups at the right stage will help to give the process greater credibility and robustness.

Third, there has to be a realistic approach to the economics of regeneration by all parties involved. Large sites in disadvantaged areas can pose a particular challenge. The marketing of vacant sites and the pace of regeneration following their sale will be affected by local economic conditions. Property-owning departments can assess the proposals of potential purchasers to make sure they meet agreed planning and conservation objectives, as well as being economically sustainable.

Finally, adaptations to historic buildings and any new development need to be designed with the utmost care. This requires a deep understanding and appreciation of the existing architecture. The setting of historic buildings needs to be protected from encroachment by unsympathetic new development. The treatment of highways, parking areas, private and public open space is equally important. Where mature landscape already exists, this should be conserved and integrated into the new layout.

REFERENCE

Department for Culture, Media and Sport 1999. *The Disposal of Historic Buildings: Guidance Note for Government Departments and Non-departmental Public Bodies*. London: DCMS

The revitalisation of Marylebone High Street

Simon Baynham

Property Director, The Howard de Walden Estate

Back in 1995 the pedestrian flow in Marylebone High Street was so poor that one influential local commentator said that you could fire a cannonball down the street with no risk of hitting anybody. Since the 1960s, the High Street had gradually lost its way. What had once been a thriving community of independent retailers and artisans went into long and gradual decline throughout the 1970s and 1980s, before finally collapsing in the recession of the early 1990s. By 1995 a third of the shops were either vacant or occupied by temporary charity shops, which were there to reduce the rates liability. It was a pretty desperate situation. It was beginning to look as though a cannonball might be the kindest option, just to put the place out of its misery.

Looking at Marylebone High Street today, that mid-1990s nadir seems a lifetime ago. Business is booming and footfall is currently three times greater than it was 12 years ago. Even the present recession has done little to dent the street's progress. During the last 12 months we have had just one shop available to let and we received 10 offers within a matter of weeks. The Colliers rental survey recently confirmed that Marylebone High Street was one of only four high streets in the UK where rents had advanced over the past year.

The dramatic turnaround of what is now one of London's best-loved high streets was no accident. Instead it came about as the result of a generation change in the management at the Howard de Walden Estate – the area's major landowner. The new management came to the conclusion that revitalising the High Street's retail offering would provide a boost to the whole area and lift the office and residential values of the estate's adjoining properties.

Back in 1995 it was clear to us that to revitalise the street we needed to attract shoppers from outside the immediate area, and we felt that a supermarket could be a major draw. Despite receiving significantly higher offers from Sainsbury's and Tesco, the estate chose Waitrose – a retailer we believed would act as a magnet for residents and workers from further afield. Choosing the right supermarket was the easy part – creating a suitable space within a densely populated conservation area was considerably more difficult. Thankfully both the estate and Westminster City Council were convinced of the importance of this development,

and despite protracted delays none of the considerable hurdles proved insurmountable. Waitrose opened in 1999.

With the new supermarket set to anchor the middle of the High Street, the estate turned its attention to the north end, where a large derelict tyre depot offered a stark visual representation of the area's decay. The estate agreed to sell a long lease to the Conran Shop for a 2320-square-metre (25,000-square-foot) store: its glamorous presence would help attract other quality retailers to the smaller units in the High Street. Conran opened its rather stylish doors in 1998.

With these two big-name stores in place, we could work on improving the remainder of the High Street. One significant problem was that the estate controlled only 40 per cent of the street's 85 shops and restaurants, so to increase our ability to shape the street we needed to buy up as many long leases as possible. Having heard plenty of empty promises in the past, many of the leaseholders were sceptical about the chances of the High Street ever being regenerated, so were willing to sell for a very sensible price. Our level of control quickly increased to around 70 per cent of the High Street's units.

The next challenge was to improve the quality and variety of the retailers. Removing inappropriate tenants was the hardest part of the renewal project – many had statutory rights and could renew their leases at a market rate, and the estate had very few legal powers to move them on. The best avenue open to us was to offer attractive terms on alternative accommodation in the area's side streets. It was a difficult time – we were always conscious that we were dealing with people's livelihoods, people who in some cases had spent their whole working lives on Marylebone High Street. We drew some bad press at the time, but we remained confident in the long-term benefits of our plan.

Once we had possession of some of the smaller units, we had to make them more attractive to our desired retailers. Many units were awkwardly shaped, damp and uneconomic in size. A typical Victorian shop will offer just 32 square metres (350 square feet) of trading space with a light-well at the rear, leading through to a small storage room. In most cases we were able to cover over the light-well and knock the shop through, doubling the size of the open retail accommodation. We then converted the basements to provide sufficient storage and staff accommodation or, in some cases, additional retail space.

Marylebone High Street in the 1900s – a once thriving commercial community in desperate decline. © Howard de Walden Estates

Adjoining many of the High Street's shops were the residential entrances serving the upper-floor accommodation, which meant that the retail frontage was small and narrow. To make the shop fronts more attractive, we tried wherever possible to carry out lateral conversions of the residential apartments across three or four buildings, which could then be accessed via a single staircase. The redundant entrances could then be incorporated into the retail space, allowing for more expansive frontages.

We were keen to retain some of the quirkiness and character of the Victorian shops rather than just knocking out dull rectangular units. Examples of very useable but irregular-shaped shops include The Natural Kitchen at 77/78 Marylebone High Street and Skandium at 85/86 Marylebone High Street. We were also conscious that not everything needed changing, and that it was important to look after shops such as the wonderful galleried Daunt Books and the ever-popular Patisserie Valerie. The estate made a special effort to retain these tenants by offering comfortable terms at renewal.

Tenant selection for our new-look High Street

Bringing Marylebone High Street back to life – one key to success was to retain some of the quirkiness and character of the Victorian shops rather than just knocking out dull rectangular units. © Howard de Walden Estates

Marylebone High Street transformed – today business is booming and footfall three times what it was 12 years ago.

was a fascinating phase. We did not want a clone high street of major multiples, but nor did we want the expensive retailers that occupy Bond Street. We wanted retailers with a point of difference – exclusive in terms of merchandise, but not in terms of price. We wanted to create a unique, friendly urban village. We were fortunate to find a young retail agency called CWM, which seemed to fully understand what we were trying to achieve. We went through a huge informal consultation – visiting numerous retailers and talking incessantly with residents, friends and anyone else with an opinion. The question we asked was: 'What do residents and workers want on a day-to-day basis and what will make them visit Marylebone High Street rather than competing streets?' We did not always get our selection right, as some of the new retailers gave outstanding presentations but turned out to be a disappointment – an inevitable consequence of dealing with independents without track records. Others surpassed all expectations, and the area was soon graced with the likes of Cath Kidston, Cologne & Cotton, Divertimenti, VV Rouleaux, Fishworks, The Ginger Pig, La Fromagerie, Rococo and La Pain Quotidien.

With the introduction of the popular Sunday farmers' market and a Saturday food and fashion market called Cabbages & Frocks, Marylebone High Street has now become a genuine seven-day-a-week offering, with some traders reporting Sundays as their best trading day.

With the High Street now a thriving retail destination the bad press we received in the early days has turned into glowing tributes. We no longer find it necessary to spend thousands on promoting the street – its unique tenant mix promotes itself perfectly well – but we continue to organise the annual Christmas Lights and Summer Fayre, both of which offer an important showcase for our urban village. This year more than 30,000 people visited the Summer Fayre on a sunny summer's day. In a survey commissioned by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, Radio 4 listeners voted the High Street as London's favourite street, and the estate won The Academy of Urbanism's inaugural award for the best street project in Britain and Ireland.

But for me, the satisfaction is not that we have achieved recognition and awards, but the simple fact that I can look down Marylebone High Street and see and feel the wonderful community atmosphere and the crafted balance of shops. It is also the satisfaction of having confounded traditional retail theory by creating a successful modern high street while avoiding blue-chip multiples. In a sense, we have fired a cannonball up Marylebone High Street, but only a metaphorical one.

Changing places: celebrating conservation and regeneration in England's North-West

Henry Owen John
Planning and Development Regional Director, English Heritage North-West Region

Twenty years ago an unnatural silence was one of the most conspicuous characteristics of an area just to the east of Manchester's city centre. Vast textile mills, once full of workers and clattering machinery, stood empty and derelict except for some light industry and some criminal activity. The place that Engels and Marx had studied as part of their seminal works on the condition of the working classes, and that had exported its innovative fireproof technologies to America, had lost its purpose.

Sixty kilometres (40 miles) to the west, swathes of once-prosperous and elegant Georgian terraces on the margins of Liverpool city centre were also only partly occupied and in decline, the scars of the Toxteth riots still visible.

A hundred kilometres (60 miles) to the north, but a world away, a market town overlooking Morecambe Bay from the foot of the Lake District fells did not show such catastrophic signs of failure, but nevertheless the effect of changes in the agricultural economy were there to see in the physical fabric of the buildings and streets.

Today, Ancoats, Canning (and other parts of inner Liverpool) and Ulverston are very different

places. What they have in common is that their historic character and appearance, previously masked by dereliction and decay, has been used as an essential component of the much-abused 'r' word: regeneration. All continue to face challenges, but there are examples of successes to celebrate, some of which can act as a model for what can happen elsewhere. So, in today's bureaucratic speak, what does success look like and what is there to celebrate?

Ancoats today is still work in progress, but has been transferred from the no-go zone of the 1990s. Importantly it still contains a mix of uses, and is not completely overtaken by residential apartments shoe-horned into the former mills, although this is a significant and valuable component. Sankey's Soap, one of the foremost places on Manchester's clubbing scene, is still housed in the lower levels of the Grade II* Beehive Mill, and buildings which offer business and commercial uses provide for the type of mix which can help to make an area work. New build on sites where there was little of historic value or where structures of significance have been lost is also an important component of success: the types of uses that may not be easily accommodated in a highly graded listed building can often go in here. The spaces between the buildings are critical: Ancoats has a road system without priority at junctions, a corresponding lack of clutter and a better-than-normal relationship between cars and people.

In Canning today it seems inconceivable that splendid Georgian homes were ever at risk. In the early days of regeneration it was the housing asso-

Murrays Mills in the Ancoats district of Liverpool before and after its restoration by the Ancoats Building Preservation Trust (now known as Heritage Works). Juggling the varied objectives of different funding partners has been a huge challenge and the new uses that will secure the long-term future of the conservation area are still being put in place.
© Ian Finlay architects (before) and © BDP/HWBPT (after)

The once-prosperous Georgian terraces of Canning suffered severely from economic and population decline for much of the second half of the 20th century. Now in good order again, this part of Liverpool stands a good chance of riding out the recession, aided by the popularity of its distinctive historic character with owners and tenants alike. © English Heritage

Ulverston in Cumbria: formerly a struggling market town, Ulverston has been reinventing itself as a cultural hub with an emphasis on locally produced food.

ciations and social landlords that came to the rescue. This was not without its problems – the subdivision of the generous interiors into apartments could not be easily done without causing some harm, and maintenance standards are sometimes less good than those of some (but not all) private owners. But without the housing associations, more terraces would have been lost when conditions were off-putting for the private investor. Because the regeneration of Canning has, in essence, worked, the focus is now elsewhere – for example, on the warehouses and merchants' houses of the Ropewalks, which grew up close to the Old Dock. But it should not be forgotten how close we came to losing something that we now take for granted. Put in the context of the decline in Liverpool's population from 825,000 after the Second World War to 450,000 in the mid-1990s, this near loss should not seem so surprising.

Ulverston has done a good job of re-inventing itself in recent years, notwithstanding the devastating effect that Foot and Mouth disease had on the agricultural and visitor economies. Here the physical renewal of buildings, shop-fronts, streets and squares has formed part of a wider cultural approach to regeneration. Arts businesses have been encouraged and thrive, there are street festivals and the celebration of one of its favourite sons, Stan Laurel, has, even without Oliver Hardy, helped to make Ulverston a place to visit, as well as to live and work in. The emphasis on locally produced food is also helping to sustain the economy in a way that allows continued investment in the town.

In these three very different places in the North-West of England there is undoubtedly success to celebrate – derelict buildings repaired and brought back into use, streets and squares re-laid with good materials, a focus on the pedestrian rather than the car and a new localism. The historic and architectural character and appearance of these places, reflected in the listed status of key buildings and conservation-area designations, has been one of the drivers of high-quality regeneration. But such success does not just happen – it has to be worked at.

There are a number of ingredients essential to the regeneration of places in a way that draws on their special character and distinctiveness. These include the vision to see through dereliction to what might be; the strategy and partnership working needed to deliver it; and the resilience and commitment to overcoming the obstacles that will inevitably be encountered. Local authorities, regional development agencies and regeneration companies, private owners and developers and the heritage sector, including English Heritage and building preservation trusts, all have their part to play in ensuring that there are successes like Ancoats, Canning and Ulverston to celebrate in future. ■

The Regent Quarter, King's Cross

Paddy Pugh
Planning and Development Regional Director, English Heritage London Region

The four street blocks to the east of King's Cross Station owe their existence to the transport developments which transformed this part of London in the 19th century. The Regent Canal, completed in 1820, and the Great Northern Railway Company's London terminus, completed in 1852, made this an ideal location for industries needing access to good transport links. Until 1830 this area had been open fields but by 1870 developments such as the St Pancras Ironworks and Henry Pontifex's Copper and Brass Foundry had transformed it into one dominated by industry and warehousing. The buildings were constructed according to best practice of the day, established in the textile mills and dockyard workshops, with solid brick walls surrounding iron and timber framing. When the original industries left, these robust, flexible structures were easy to adapt to new uses.

The result was that 100 years later most of these buildings had survived in their original form. So too had the distinctive pattern of courtyards, alleys and gateways around which they were built. Islington Council had recognised the special character of this coherent group of historic buildings

and spaces and included all four street blocks within the King's Cross Conservation Area. Very few of the buildings were of a quality that merited listing, but most made a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Even so, by the end of the 20th century the area was in serious decline. Uncertainty over the development of London's Eurostar Terminal and a traffic gyratory system introduced in 1963 had left the area blighted. Many of the buildings were underused or derelict, and perceptions of the area were poor.

The planning policy framework was in place to encourage investment and guide change. Regional Planning Guidance had designated King's Cross as 'an opportunity area on the margins of central London'. Islington's Unitary Development Plan had also designated King's Cross as an 'Area of Opportunity'. The council's Planning Brief, produced in 1998, had a primary objective to 'transform an area of long-term decline by providing high-quality development and improving the image and public perception of King's Cross'. Yet landowner P&O Developments, and regeneration agency The King's Cross Partnership could not see any future for the area other than wholesale clearance and redevelopment.

Faced with the prospect of losing such an important part of London's industrial heritage, English Heritage commissioned planning consultancy Urban Initiatives to produce an Urban Design Framework for the area. The study's aim was 'the stimulation of a more creative response to the area's regeneration, one which not only respects the history and conservation area status of the site, but fully exploits the contribution which the existing buildings made to a distinct and unique sense of place'.

First, the practice carried out a systematic analysis of the three street blocks within the ownership of P&O Developments. Then it explored the potential for regenerating one of the blocks through a conservation-led strategy of repair and renewal. This resulted in the identification of four possible options with varying balances of retention and replacement of existing buildings. Overall, the objective was to explore whether a conservation-led strategy could deliver a commercially viable scheme. Engineers Alan Baxter and Associates carried out a condition survey of all the buildings to identify where retention and repair was practicable. Valuers Drivers Jonas tested the financial viability of the options and cost consultants Murdoch Green Kensalls checked that development costs were realistic. Drivers Jonas advised that all four options were commercially viable. In addition, the regeneration of one street block would lift rental values in the wider area by some 25 per cent by stimulating confidence and investment.

The Urban Initiatives Study enabled the landowner and regeneration agency to see King's Cross in a different way – to recognise the inherent qualities and distinctiveness of the buildings which had been hidden by years of decline and under-investment. Persuaded by the potential of the area, P&O Developments instructed architects and landscape consultants to prepare a full development scheme based upon the Urban Initiatives study. The resulting Regent Quarter is a huge success, not just for the developer but also for the city. It has created a vibrant new quarter and transformed perceptions of King's Cross.

This is a classic example of how a conservation-led approach to urban renewal can deliver distinctive and attractive developments by reinforcing the

A small blighted corner of the Regent Quarter conservation area that has been brought back to vibrant life.

An architect's impression of how the Regent Quarter conservation area would look once the King's Cross regeneration scheme was complete. © RHWL Architects

qualities and characteristics that make a place special. The Regent Quarter is testimony that it can also deliver commercial viability and wider investment opportunities by changing perceptions and stimulating confidence in the area.

Based on this successful experience, we have applied a similar approach to the Hanway Street conservation area on the borders of Camden and Westminster at the eastern end of Oxford Street. This is a fascinating backwater of attractive, but neglected, domestic-scaled buildings behind much larger buildings on the Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road frontages. The eastern end of Oxford Street has been blighted for years, and the redevelopment of Tottenham Court Road station for Crossrail has generated further uncertainty.

English Heritage has appointed Urban Practitioners supported by Allies & Morrison and CBRE to develop a range of options for retention and renewal coupled with improved connectivity to the surrounding areas – a similar approach to the Regent Quarter. Each option has been prepared in full recognition of the need to demonstrate economic viability.

In recent years, Westminster City Council has been hugely successful in encouraging the sympathetic revitalisation of similar areas across the West End – at St Christopher's Place, Lancashire Court, Newburgh Street, Seven Dials, and in recent work by the Crown Estate in Swallow Street as part of its ORB project. Cumulatively this is changing people's experience of the West End, as once neglected backwaters are being given a new lease of life adding to the overall commercial attraction. The transformation of the Hanway Street conservation area could offer a further opportunity for sensitive, contextual change and kickstart the regeneration of the entire area. It will require vision and commitment from both the council and the landowners, but English Heritage is determined to ensure that the case for conservation-led regeneration is fully articulated and understood before decisions are taken on its future.

Living sustainably in conservation areas

Chris Wood
Head of Building Conservation and Research Team, English Heritage

Everyone has a duty to live in a sustainable way, regardless of where they live. Within conservation areas, the aim should be to preserve those features of value that made them worthy of designation while complying with today's imperative to minimise the use of energy, which is fuelling climate change. Unfortunately there is a widespread perception that older buildings are inherently inefficient and solutions point to the replacement of, or drastic alterations to important features such as windows, walls, roofs and chimneys.

Clearly the world's population is not living in a sustainable way. Estimates vary but we need 2 or 3 planet Earths to provide for our present consumption. Using energy is a part of this issue, but is particularly important in England where most of it comes from burning fossil fuels. Reducing the energy used in the home is a very obvious first step towards 'good housekeeping' and more sustainable living. Research commissioned by the Energy Saving Trust indicates that TVs and hi-fis alone account for 16 per cent of the total domestic-energy consumption and the average household has up to 12 appliances left on standby or charging at any time. Major carbon savings can be made through improving the control of, and reducing the temperature for central heating, domestic water and washing machines. Other beneficial changes such low-energy lighting and efficient boilers have very little impact on the fabric of a building.

Significant improvements to energy efficiency can also be made without harming the character of buildings. Loft insulation is the most obvious, but it is important that it covers those relatively inaccessible areas near the eaves. In most conservation areas windows are a particularly significant and unifying feature and the replacement of timber sashes with double-glazing in PVCu usually destroys this unity. Recent testing commissioned by English Heritage has shown that it is possible to upgrade existing windows to rival the performance of modern double-glazing.

Repairing historic windows must be the first and most sustainable option. Almost all wooden windows more than a hundred years old were made with slow-grown softwood timber, which is extremely difficult to source today. It is a testimony to the quality of this timber that so many windows survive despite little regular maintenance. The failure to look after old windows is a major reason they are thought to be responsible for most of a building's draughts and heat loss. However, repairs and modern draught-proofing can virtually eliminate such problems. Heat is still lost through glass but the tests showed that net curtains, blinds and heavy curtains will halve this, and closing shutters or installing secondary glazing produces the same results as modern double-glazing. Critics point out that shutters and curtains are only effective at night. However, as people adapt to a more energy-conscious way of living they will quickly learn to leave unoccupied rooms 'closed up', as they were in the days of the previous low-carbon economy.

The same kinds of improvement can be made to steel and iron windows, which are also important features in some conservation areas. English Heritage and Historic Scotland have recently commissioned Glasgow Caledonian University to carry out laboratory tests on a range of alternative energy-saving innovations, all of which aim to improve the performance of historic windows.

The clarion call from many government agencies is to 'insulate, insulate, insulate!' While some insulation may be beneficial, great care is needed. The most effective way of insulating walls is to provide this externally, but this completely changes

The original windows on this terraced house have been draught-proofed. An air-pressure test showed that this was more effective than that found in 90 per cent of today's new buildings.

Testing the effectiveness of different improvements on historic steel, cast-iron and timber windows in the environmental chamber at Glasgow Caledonian University.

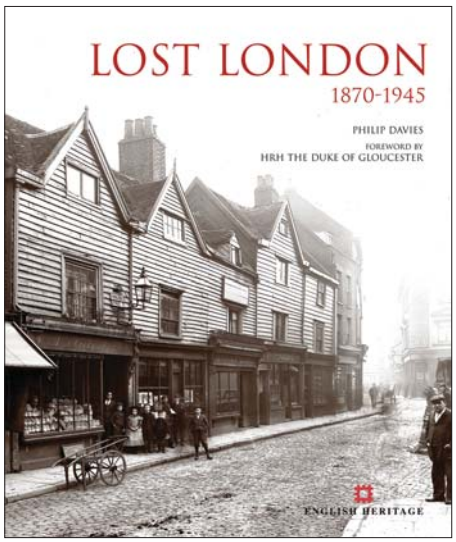
the distinctive appearance of stone, brick, flint or timber-framed buildings. Adding a few more centimetres to the outside of a building can also create difficulties around windows, cills, doors and corners. Internal insulation is the more usual option but can lead to an unacceptable loss of floor-space in a small building as well as the destruction of internal features such as fireplaces, skirtings, panelling and covings. Old walls are often damper than modern ones and ill-considered insulation can lead to future problems.

Roofs are vital features in conservation areas, and especially so in the case of terraced houses. For maximum efficiency insulation is best carried out on top of the rafters but this will lift the roof-line above that of the neighbours. Insulating between the rafters is the obvious alternative solution but again, great care is needed to make sure that there is sufficient ventilation to prevent damp affecting the roof structure.

Chimneys are also essential features of traditional buildings but are often seen as a source of great heat loss, particularly if redundant. However, older buildings need more ventilation than new ones and if doors and windows are draught-proofed then the chimney provides much-needed air changes. Excessive heat loss can be prevented by installing a flue damper in the chimney-breast.

Renewable technologies can be a useful addition once 'good housekeeping' and fabric improvements have been adopted. Their efficiency and cost-effectiveness have yet to be fully demonstrated, however, and many of them – for example small wind turbines and roof-mounted photo-voltaic panels – can have a drastic effect on a conservation area. Solar water heating can bring significant benefits providing it is sited sensibly – ideally off the roof or within a hidden roof slope.

Ultimately, sustainable living requires everyone to carefully consider all their everyday activities – from travelling and working to how they adapt and run their homes. Much can be done now and technological innovation and a 'greening' of the fuel supply will significantly help in the future. To ensure that future generations can also enjoy the distinctive character of our conservation areas, drastic and irreversible change must be limited and the most valued features preserved.



Lost London 1870–1945

by Philip Davies

This spectacular collection of 600 photographs from the former London County Council archive of photographs has been held by English Heritage for the past 25 years but never before published in such depth. This unique record of the lost buildings and streets of London is not simply a nostalgic lament but the key to a new London vernacular that reinforces the character and identity of the capital's oldest neighbourhoods and resonates with a deep sense of place.

PUBLICATION DATE: 27 October 2009 PRICE: £29.99

ISBN: 978 0 9557949 8 8 Hardback, 368pp

SPECIAL OFFER: To order your copy for £25 including free UK mainland delivery, call Littlehampton Book Services on 01903 828503 and quote reference LLCB02. This offer is valid until 31 December 2009, or while stocks last.

News from English Heritage

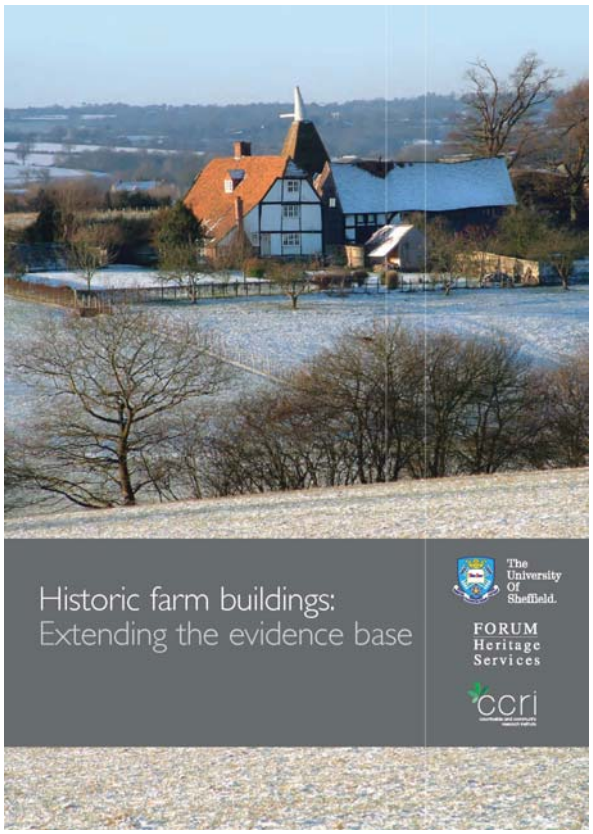
Historic Farm Buildings: Extending the Evidence Base

Despite their historic character, traditional farm buildings play an important role in the future of the countryside. As well as contributing to local distinctiveness and historic interest they represent a major asset in terms of their capacity to adapt to new forms of economic activity. Until now, there has been an unhelpful lack of robust evidence about the character and condition of the traditional building stock in different parts of rural England. Without such basic information, informed and sensitive management of change and effective targeting of scarce resources for conservation is not possible.

Drawing on newly commissioned research, this publication demonstrates how such data can now be collected and analysed at different spatial scales. As well as providing new information on the character and condition of the stock of historic farm buildings and its relationship to the broader landscape, it sheds new light on the re-use of farm buildings for residential and business use.

The publication is also available on the Historic Environment Local Management website at **www.helm.org.uk/farmbuildings** and a new website **www.farmsteadstoolkit.co.uk** provides draft characterisation and planning tools.

Contact: Sarah Tunnicliffe; tel: 020 7973 3620; email: sarah.tunnicliffe@english-heritage.org.uk



Heritage Counts 2009

The 2009 edition of *Heritage Counts* was published in October of this year. The report contains recent statistics for the heritage sector's assets, resources and participation levels. Among the issues this year's report discusses are Heritage Protection Reform (including the proposed Planning Policy Statement 15) and the increasing importance of 'quality of place' in government thinking. The role of the historic environment in the new regional structures, and the effects of the recession on the sector are also considered. To mark the 15th anniversary of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) this year's Heritage Counts also contains coverage of the fund's role in the sector. For more information please visit **www.heritagecounts.org.uk**

Contact: John Davies; tel: 020 7973 3840; email: john.davies@english-heritage.org.uk

World Heritage Planning Circular

World Heritage Sites (WHS) are sites, places, monuments or buildings of 'Outstanding Universal Value' to all humanity. Currently the UK has 28 sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Since the UK ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1984, WHS have been protected through the UK planning system as well as through designation of individual elements. WHS are a key material consideration that regional and local authorities must bear in mind when making planning decisions in or around them.

In July of this year, DCLG published *Planning Circular 07/2009: On the Protection of World Heritage in England*. This is yet another positive step towards reforming and streamlining England's Heritage Protection System and fulfills the commitment government made in 2007 to clarify and strengthen protection for WHS. To accompany this, English Heritage has produced explanatory *Guidance for The Protection and Management of World Heritage Sites in England*. For more information, please visit **www.english-heritage.org.uk/whcircular**

Contact: Andrea Wiechern; tel: 020 7973 3119; email: andrea.wiechern@english-heritage.org.uk

PPS15 consultation

PPS15 *Planning for the Historic Environment* was issued for consultation by DCLG on 24 July for a period of 14 weeks to 30 October. At the same time the *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* to accompany the PPS was available on the English Heritage website as a 'living draft' with comments sought on how effectively it offered guidance on the interpretation and use of the PPS in the planning system.

The next steps are for DCLG to review the comments received on the PPS and the Practice Guide with DCMS and English Heritage. If the consultation has thrown up few important issues, there is a possibility that the PPS could be brought into operation before the spring of 2010.

English Heritage held a number of events in early August and September to inform the historic environment sector, and the wider planning and development sector, as well as local authority officers and our Historic Environment Champions, about the new Planning Policy Statement and what the key changes were from the old Planning Policy Guidance documents PPG15 *Planning and the Historic Environment* and PPG16 *Archaeology and Planning*.

Contact: for more information please email: planning.policy@english-heritage.org.uk

A statue celebrating Edith Cavell in St Martin's Place, London

Women and heritage website

English Heritage is shining the spotlight on women's history with a new web-based resource. In partnership with the Women's Library and the TUC Library, a researcher has been commissioned to investigate what our shared resources can tell us about the relationship between women and the historic environment. This will build on existing content provided by English Heritage staff on a wide variety of subjects including listed buildings related to women in healthcare, oral histories of female maids at Brodsworth House, and blue plaques awarded to notable women. You can find out more here: **www.english heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.20499**

Contact: Rosie Sherrington; tel: 020 7973 3167; email: rosie.sherrington@english-heritage.org.uk

West Dean College

Between January and May 2010 West Dean College will be offering the following intensive courses in its English Heritage validated Building Conservation Masterclasses series:

11–14 January	Conservation and Repair of Architectural and Structural Metalwork
25–28 January	Specifying Conservation Works
8–10 February	The Historic Interior: An Introduction to Commissioning and Managing Conservation Research
22–25 March	Conservation of Stone Surfaces and Detail
12–15 April	Conservation and Repair of Brick, Terracotta and Flint Masonry
26–29 April	Conservation and Repair of Masonry Ruins
17–20 May	Conservation and Repair of Plasters and Renders

For further information on all the courses in this programme, please contact Liz Campbell at West Dean College, West Dean, Chichester, West Sussex PO18 0QZ;
tel: 01243 818219 or 0844 4994408;
fax: 01243 811343; e-mail: bcm@westdean.org.uk
web: **www.westdean.org.uk**

The National Monuments Record
News and Events

The NMR is the public archive of English Heritage, holding more than 10 million photographs, plans, drawing, reports records and publications covering England's archaeology, architecture social and local history.

Find out more online at
www.english-heritage.org.uk/nmr
Or contact: Enquiries & Research Services, NMR, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 GZ
tel: 01793 414600; fax: 01793 414606; email: nmrinfo@english-heritage.org.uk

The place where you can find out about us, including our services, our collections and how to contact us.

Heritage and conservation areas at risk

The recent announcements regarding heritage at risk and conservation areas at risk highlight how invaluable archive records and photographic resources can be in illustrating the way buildings and areas are changing over time.

The NMR recently looked at more than 25 conservation areas across the country to see what images are in our archive as part of English Heritage's work for this year's Conservation Areas At Risk campaign.

The images below are from Caistor, Lincolnshire, and illustrate how a chapel has been converted to a library, while maintaining the original characteristics of the building.

The Congregational chapel in Church Street, Caistor, Lincolnshire before and after its conversion into a library.

Graphical Information Systems (GIS) and conservation areas

To support English Heritage's work in the local historic environment, the NMR is currently building up a spatial dataset of conservation area boundaries for the whole of England. Data gathered so far have already been used to carry out geographic analysis of conservation areas, in relation to statutory designations and heritage at risk and to inform casework.

So far more than half of the local planning authorities in England have contributed boundary data and agreed to provide updates, and English Heritage is inviting more authorities to participate. Although for reasons of copyright the boundaries will only be accessible internally, the analysis resulting from them will be available to inform the whole historic environment sector.

The national historic environment record, which contains 400,000 searchable records relating to England's archaeological and architectural heritage, including maritime records.

Getting NMR resources online

During the last few years the NMR, along with many other organisations in the sector, has been making more and more material available online. For us, the specific driver for much of the recent work was the NMR Review in 2004, where we asked for feedback from the sector and our users.

Our online resources, of more than **one and a quarter million items**, can be found on these tailored websites:

A contemporary archive containing more than 323,000 colour images of England's listed buildings taken between 1999 and 2008, from phone boxes to bridges, milestones to manor houses.

www.english-heritage.org.uk

www.pastscape.org.uk

www.imagesofengland.org.uk

www.viewfinder.org.uk

A website with more than 80,000 historic images of England from the 1850s to the present day, covering a diverse range of subjects including social, industrial, architectural and archaeological history.

www.heritagegateweay.org.uk

A fast way to search our records and photographs alongside local records of England's historic sites and buildings, including listed building details.

www.heritageexplorer.org.uk

An educational website which brings together images from our archive and other information to provide a resource for teachers tailored to national curriculum subjects.

www.englishheritageprints.org.uk

The website where you can buy prints and canvases from a selection of our best images online and have them delivered to your door.

Legal Developments

Changes to permitted development rights

Mike Harlow, *Legal Director, English Heritage*

Householder permitted development rights were significantly altered last October to allow more to be done to our houses without the need for planning permission. My neighbour is busily taking advantage. It worries me that things may be being done to our conservation area that should not be done, or rather, would not have been done had he been required to apply for permission.

In July the Government opened a consultation on proposals to change permitted development rights in relation to non-domestic properties, with the aim, again, of fewer applications for permission being made. This may lead to an increase in the number of applications for certificates of lawful development, but the net result should still be a real reduction in the burden of the system on the applicant and the planning authority.

The question is: what does this mean for the historic environment?

If all the applications that would have been made, but for these changes, would have been given consent, then of course the answer is: it does not matter. Let's take the economic benefit of less red-tape and sleep well.

But that simply cannot be true for all circumstances. The definition of what is permitted cannot be expected to cope with the infinite variations in our world. Raising the sluice will allow a lot or works through that will have no material impact on what we value in our surroundings, but some genuinely damaging works will inevitably slide through with them. They may be at the 'minor' end of the scale, but they could have a significant impact cumulatively.

Government recognises the potential bluntness of the changed system. The consultation draft of *PPS15: Planning for the Historic Environment* has a specific draft policy (HE5.1) on the topic. It says, in short, that planning authorities should consider whether permitted development rights undermine the broader conservation aims of the policy. If so, authorities are asked to consider removing the permitted development rights that have that effect through an Article 4 Direction. The policy suggests such a direction could relate to a single property, a class of properties or an area, such as a conservation area.

When I suggest Article 4 Directions to planning authorities as a means to their end I usually get frowns and mumbling about resources. This is fair enough. The process is cumbersome, can involve getting permission from the Secretary of State and can give rise to compensation claims years later.

It is good news, therefore, that as part of the consultation on non-domestic permitted development rights, the government is also asking for views on changes to the process of making Article 4 Directions and the consequences of so doing. Broadly, the proposals are:

- to limit compensation claims to applications refused within 12 months of the direction, or, if notice of an intention to make an Article 4 is given 12 months in advance, to remove the requirement to compensate; and
- to remove the requirement for Secretary of State approval of any Article 4 Directions.

The consultation document goes on to say that government will still only expect permitted development rights to be withdrawn in exceptional circumstances where there is a real and specific threat. In other words, this is not an opportunity for the anxious to row against the tide of reform and reset the sluice to where it was. Re-imposing the burden of a requirement to apply for planning permission has to be justified on the grounds that it will assist in the conservation of something we, the public, value.

That justification should, of course, spring from the process of identifying that which is worth bothering with in the area (the assessment of significance in PPS15 language) and considering the policies needed to protect it. If the conclusion is: national policies and the local development framework are all well and good, but permitted development will drive through those best-laid schemes then, as the draft PPS15 says, it is time to think about an exceptional and selective withdrawal of permitted development rights to hold the line.

The detail of the permitted development proposals can be seen at
http://tinyurl.com/nw9w8l
Draft PPS15 can be found at
http://tinyurl.com/ ntzkgr
and its draft guidance at
http://tinyurl.com/mpwrd6

New publications from English Heritage

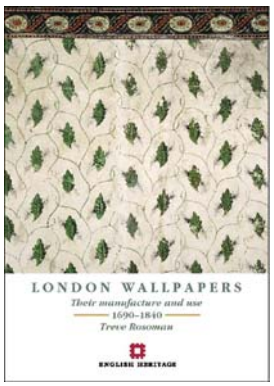
London Wallpapers: Their Manufacture and Use 1690–1840

Treve Rosoman

London Wallpapers, first published in 1992, has long been out of print. In this new, revised edition there is a substantially enlarged list of wallpaper manufacturers in all their various guises – stationers, paper stainers, paper-hanging manufacturers, paper hangers. The list has doubled in size to nearly 800 names, covering the longer period 1690 to 1840.

The book describes how the rag-based paper used for wallpaper was made and the method for printing the wallpaper, and there is also a detailed description of printing flock papers. There is a brief description of the taxes on wallpaper introduced in 1712, which still govern the normal length of paper today. Finally the book examines how the London wallpaper trade worked.

The book has 40 full-colour plates of London-made wallpapers with descriptions of each paper and the house from which it came. There are 16 black and white pictures, mostly of 18th-century trade cards used by wallpaper merchants as advertisements and for writing out receipts.



PUBLICATION DATE: November 2009
PRICE: £20.00
SPECIAL OFFER PRICE: £17.00 plus £3.40 p&p
ISBN: 978 1 84802 048 1
Paperback, 76pp

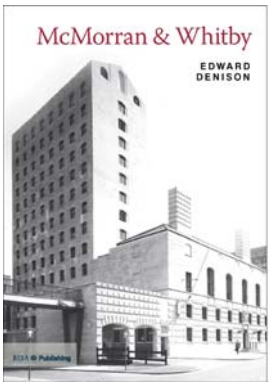
McMorran & Whitby

Edward Denison

McMorran & Whitby are arguably one of the unsung practices of post-war British architecture. Led from the late 1950s by Donald McMorran and George Whitby, the practice can be seen as part of an evolution in British classical tradition with direct linkages through other eminent figures such as Sir Edwin Lutyens and E Vincent Harris.

Their work found favour with public institutions such as the police, county and city councils, and universities. These include Devon County Hall in Exeter, various buildings at Nottingham University, West Suffolk County Council buildings in Bury St Edmunds, but, above all, numerous significant commissions for the City Corporation such as Wood Street Police Station and the extension to the Central Criminal Courts, commonly known as the New Bailey.

This book, part of the series Twentieth Century Architects, is the first major publication on McMorran & Whitby's work, and contains both contemporary photography and previously unpublished archival material.



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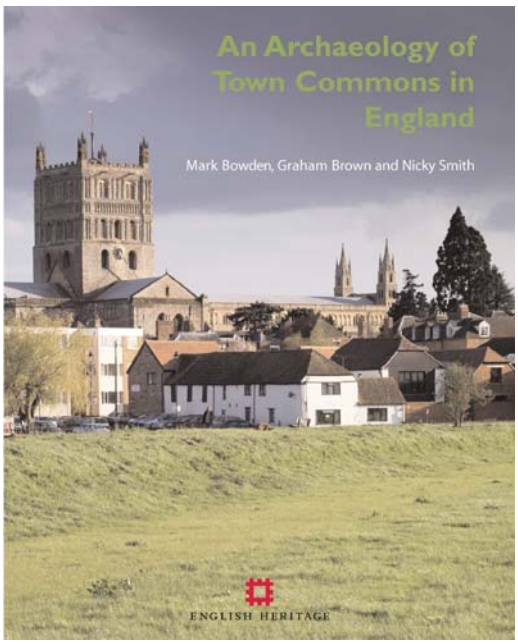
SPECIAL OFFER PRICE: £17.00 plus £3.40 p&p
ISBN: 978 1 85946 320 8
Paperback, 160pp

An Archaeology of Town Commons in England

Mark Bowden, Graham Brown and Nicky Smith

Historically, towns in England were provided with common lands for grazing the draft animals of the townspeople and for pasturing farm animals in an economy where the rural and the urban were inextricably mixed. The commons provided wood,



minerals, fruits and wild animals and also developed as places of recreation and entertainment.

Today, England's few remaining urban commons are under threat and inadequately protected, despite recognition of their wildlife and recreational value. In 2002 English Heritage embarked upon a study of those that remain and found that they preserve the physical evidence of past activities that include prehistoric and Roman settlement as well as traces of common use itself.

The recognition of town commons as a valued historical part of the modern urban environment is an important first step towards their informed conservation as a different sort of urban open space, distinct from parks and public gardens.

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SPECIAL OFFER PRICE: £15.30 plus £3.00 p&p
ISBN: 978 1 848020 35 1 Paperback, 136pp

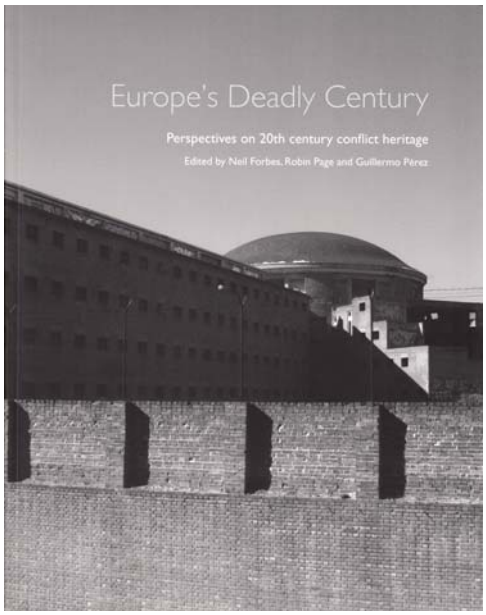
Europe's Deadly Century: Perspectives on 20th-Century Conflict Heritage

edited by Neil Forbes, Robin Page and Guillermo Pérez

In the course of Europe's 20th century, freedoms were won at the cost of terrible sacrifice. The remains of war, conflict and ideological struggle lie everywhere around us. The question of what to do with this common past, in which we all share an interest, lies at the centre of this important book.

From a variety of professional backgrounds, the contributors consider a wide range of conflict-heritage sites in the context of international and national histories and regional and local historical narratives. Questions of who 'owns' the past, the ambiguities over the way people identify with the local community or nation state, and whether or how to make moral judgements, are central.

This book will be of interest to professional practitioners, academics and policy-makers, as well as the general reader, and will open the way to a deeper understanding of the significance of Europe's conflict heritage.



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