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**Things you need to know about listed buildings**

**The origins of listing**

Listing emerged after the second world war and was established as a legal system in the Town and Country Planning Acts of 1944 and 1947. The first listing surveys were the war-time lists, or Salvage Lists. These lists were prepared by architects under a scheme initiated with the RIBA to determine whether a building should be protected from demolition if bomb damaged.

1944 Town and Country Planning Act:

* Moved responsibility for historic buildings from Ministry of Works to the new Ministry of Town and Country Planning.
* Provided for comprehensive lists of historic buildings thought worthy of preservation, for local authorities to note when preparing plans.
* Required owners of listed buildings to give two months’ notice of proposed works.

1947 Town and Country Planning Act:

* Obliged Minister to compile lists for the first time. These were only advisory and published for the guidance of local authorities.
* Required local authority to issue a Building Preservation Order in order to protect a building.
* Introduced more specific criteria and the system of grading.

The first generation of Lists was carried out on a geographical by parish basis and were brief, often without internal inspections - the result of bicycle, motorbike and only sometimes car transport. This was after the war and any available transport was rare - this was particularly felt in rural areas where special buildings were just not recorded due to lack of public access. This is where the myth began that only the outside of a building is Listed and that you can do what you like inside!

The system today is dramatically different. Historic England notifies and consults owners as a matter of course. On a site visit, HE finds out as much as they can about a building’s historical development, architectural quality, internal features, degree of survival, relationship with other buildings and historic interest. Now each listed building has its own description – the statutory List entry – on the National Heritage List for England (the List). The List is a free searchable online database and is a remarkable collection of all England’s designated assets (listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens,

battlefields, and protected wrecks).

1967 Civic Amenities Act:

* Steered through Parliament by Duncan Sandys, MP, who had founded the Civic Trust
* Introduced Conservation Areas, areas of architectural or historic interest, which local authorities were instructed to compile and amend.
* Underlined the importance of lesser buildings when they were part of a group.

1968 Town and Country Planning Act:

* Gave all buildings on the list statutory protection for the first time.
* Required owner to obtain Listed Building Consent from the local planning authority for works which would alter the building's character, with certain cases (such as total demolition and buildings owned by local authorities) to be referred to the Secretary of State.
* Increased the penalty for unauthorised works.
* Introduced notification of the five amenity societies (SPAB, Georgian Group, Ancient Monuments Society, Victorian Society and Council for British Archaeology, as well as the RCHME).
* Introduced repairs notices for neglected buildings.

1983 National Heritage Act:

* Established English Heritage as the government's lead advisor on the built historic environment in England
* Obliged Secretary of State for the Environment to consult English Heritage on listing matters, and to refer certain applications for listed building consent for advice.

2008 English Heritage published its Conservation Principles, Policies, and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment. The first Listing Selection Guides are published, setting out broad approaches to designation.

2015 On 1 April English Heritage separated into two organisations - Historic England and the English Heritage Trust, a new independent charity that will look after the National Heritage Collection. Historic England continues as an arms-length body that looks after the wider historic environment, including listing, planning, grants, research, advice and public information. The List is maintained by Historic England.

**The Grades**

There are almost 400,000 entries on the List covering listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and protected wrecks.

While all listed buildings are of special interest, there is a system to grade their relative significance. The great majority of buildings (92%) are Grade II, which means they are special. There are two higher levels of listing: Grade II\*, which means ‘particularly important buildings of more than special interest’ (5.8%), and Grade I, which covers buildings of ‘exceptional interest’, normally what are considered to be ‘textbook’ examples (2.5%).

**How to get on the List**

The key criteria for being on the List are *special architectural* and *special historic interest*, but these will differ according to the building in question.

The older a building is, the more likely it is to be listed. All buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition are listed, as are most of those built between 1700 and 1840.

From around 1840, the start of the Victorian period, when materials become more standardised and mass produced, and from when greater numbers survive, the more selective the List is. Buildings that date from after 1945 require particularly careful selection and only the best examples are listed. There are about 770 post-war listed buildings and sculptures, which is just 0.2% of all buildings on the List. Listing is rare for more recent buildings, and very selective as 50 buildings from the 1970s are listed, ten from the 1980s, and just one from the 1990s.

**How to get off the list?**

Removing a building from the list can be achieved through an application process also known as de-listing. The statutory criteria for a building being included on the List are that it holds special architectural or historic interest. The Secretary of State will remove a building from the List if it no longer meets these criteria. An application for de-listing may be made because new evidence is available about the lack of special architectural or historic interest of the building, or a material change of circumstances, for example fire damage. It is established policy that applications for de-listing will not generally be considered if: the building has had a repairs notice served on it; or is currently the subject of an appeal against refusal of consent; or if a prosecution or enforcement action of any kind, is in hand. Both listed building consent appeal and enforcement appeal procedures give appellants the right to argue that a building is not of special interest and should be removed from the List. Where one of these processes is already underway, the issue of de-listing is more properly addressed as part of that process.

**What types of buildings are on the list?**

The List is a unique record of the country’s evolving history and character and includes barrows and bunkers, palaces and pigsties, plague crosses and piers, gates and railings, tower blocks and tombstones, cathedrals, zoos, windmills, dogs and cat homes and rollercoasters. Many places and buildings on the list are well-known and even world- famous.

**Why are buildings listed?**

The most significant of England's historic buildings and places are listed so they can be understood and protected for the future. The whole of any principal building is listed, including the interior. Objects, structures and buildings affixed to a listed building or within its curtilage may also be protected by listing. It is important to establish what is listed as it is a criminal offence to fail to apply for listed building consent when it is required.

The general principels for listing are as follows:

Age and rarity: the older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. The general principles used are:

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

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

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

National interest: all buildings of strong intrinsic national architectural or historic interest included on the statutory list, but also the most significant or distinctive regional buildings that together make a major contribution to the national historic stock. The best examples of vernacular buildings will normally be listed because they illustrate the importance of distinctive local and regional building traditions or because they represent a nationally significant but localised industry, such as shoemaking in Northamptonshire or cotton production in Lancashire.

State of repair: the general state of repair and upkeep of a building will not usually be a relevant consideration when deciding whether it meets the test of special architectural or historic interest. The Secretary of State will list a building that has been assessed as meeting the statutory criteria, irrespective of its state of repair. Loss of original fabric will however be a relevant consideration when considering special interest.

With thanks to and for more information go to [www.HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk)

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