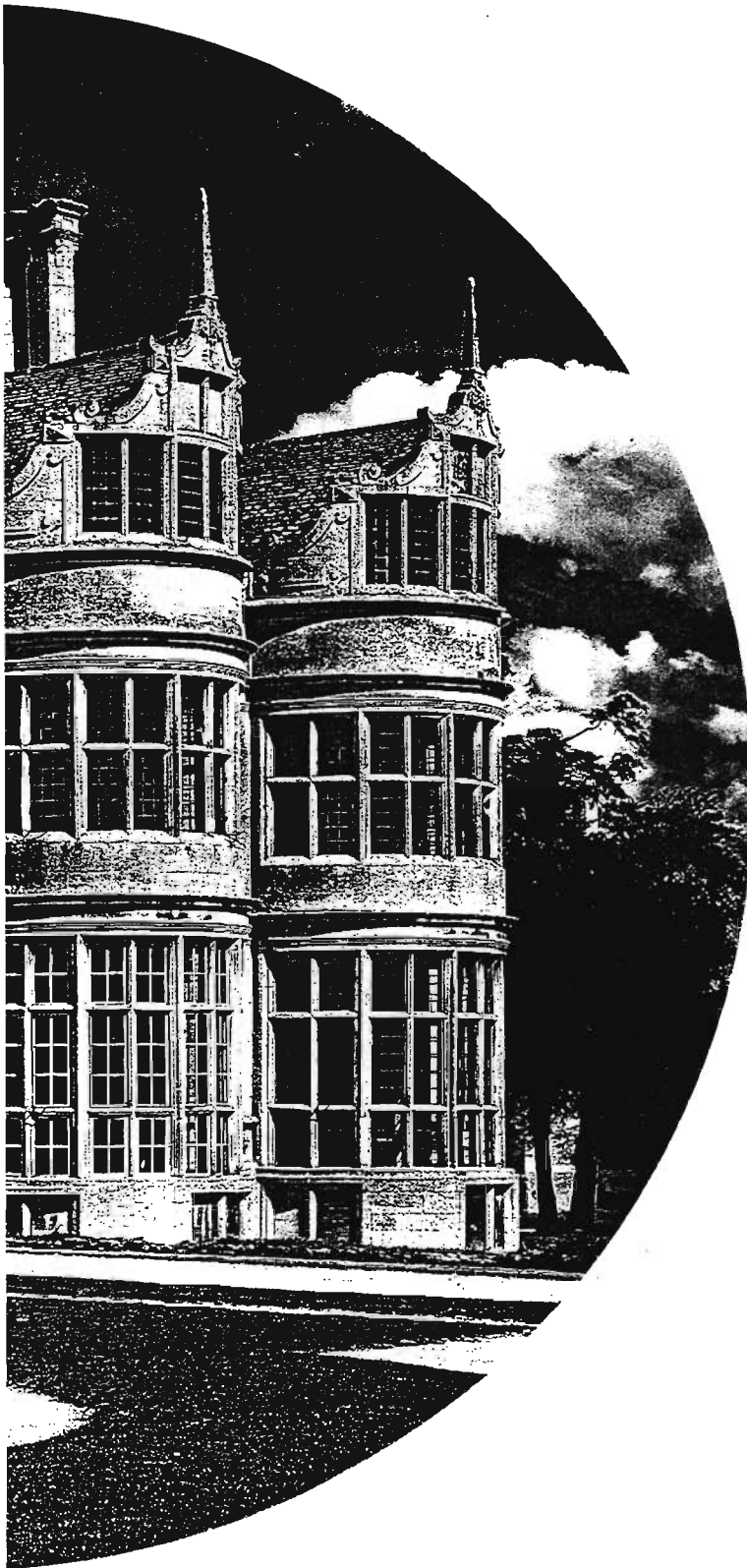


Conservation Plans for Historic Places



Heritage
Lottery Fund

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*Using money raised by the National Lottery, the aim of the **Heritage Lottery Fund** is to improve quality of life by safeguarding and enhancing the heritage of buildings, objects and the environment, whether man-made or natural, which have been important in the formation of the character and identity of the United Kingdom; assisting people to appreciate and enjoy their heritage, and allowing them to hand it on in good heart to future generations.*

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Printed on environmentally-friendly material.

Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to set out some general guidelines to assist applicants to the Heritage Lottery Fund in preparing a Conservation Plan for historic places. It shows the main areas of information we will need in assessing a project and gives advice on how to go about producing a plan. A Conservation Plan is primarily a tool for the owners or managers of a heritage asset, therefore the detailed content will vary.

Why does HLF require a Conservation Plan?

A Conservation Plan focuses on the significance of a heritage asset and which policies need to be in place to retain this. It is part of the process of understanding the asset at the outset.

Conservation Plans help us ensure that the projects we support will be of benefit to the heritage. They help demonstrate that the proposals are based on a clear understanding of the importance of all aspects of the asset and that this importance will be retained.

This is particularly relevant for:

- places of exceptional heritage merit
- places in split ownership
- places with more than one type of heritage
- major monuments and their settings (eg cathedrals)
- large complex objects such as ships
- historic sites with associated collections

How do Conservation Plans relate to other heritage plans?

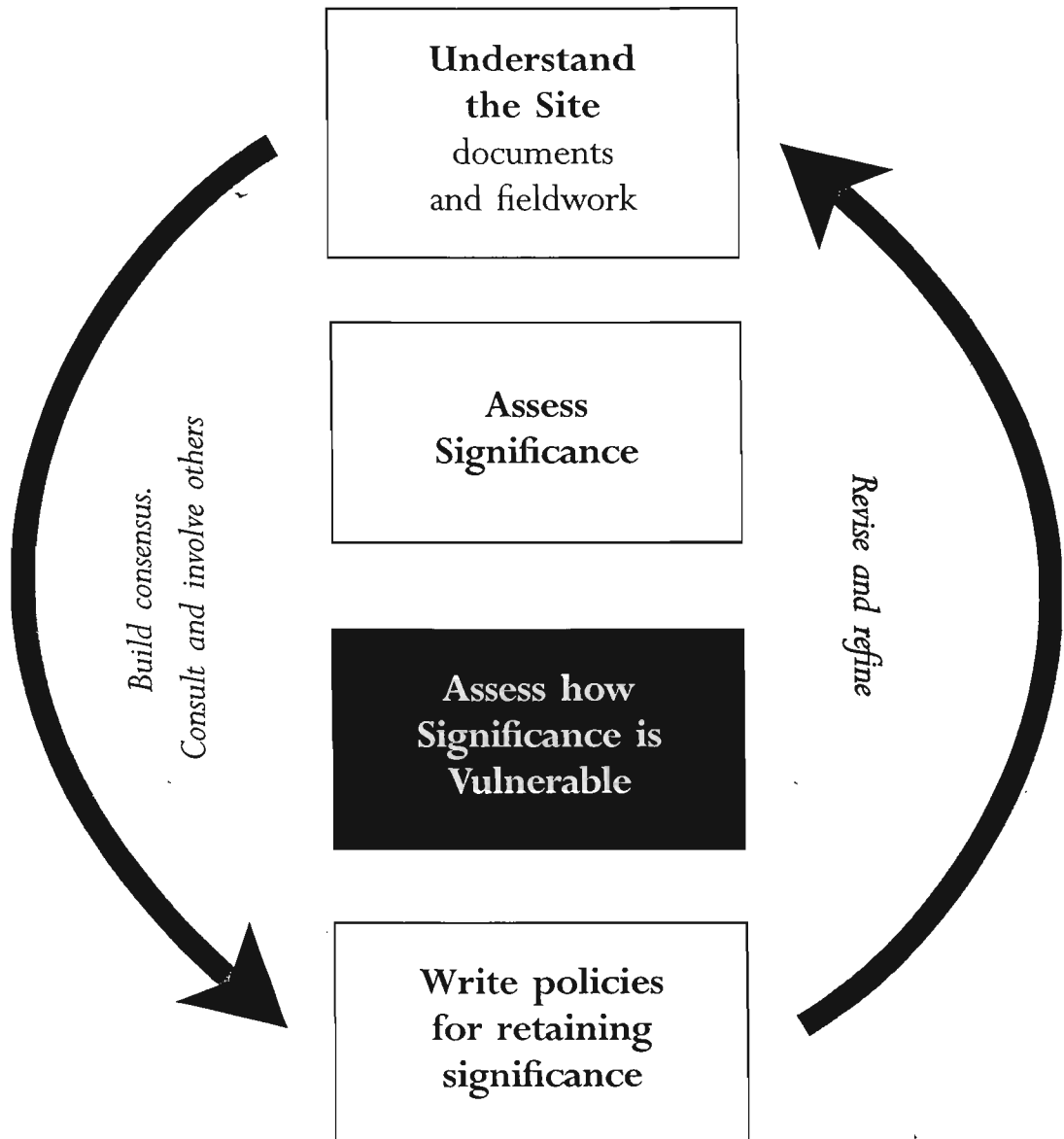
A Conservation Plan is complementary to a Restoration Plan, which can form part of the overall plan for an area comprising different types of heritage. Urban Parks and designed landscapes will require a Restoration Plan. We publish a separate brief for a Restoration Plan (see further reading p16).

Sites important for their natural heritage require Land Management Plans which also contain information on the significance of a site and the policies needed to safeguard that significance. Separate guidance on Land Management Plans is published by the countryside agencies (see further reading p16).

Terminology

The words place, site or asset are used interchangeably throughout the text to refer to the subject of the plan, which may include historic areas, landscapes, structures, archaeology, collections and large objects.

The Conservation Plan Process



I Getting started

A Conservation Plan requires research, analysis and co-ordination of often differing interests. It is worth taking time at the outset to plan the document.

What is a Conservation Plan?

A Conservation Plan is a document that explains:

- why the asset is significant or has heritage merit
- how that significance is vulnerable or sensitive to change
- what policies you will adopt for retaining that significance in any future use or development

A Conservation Plan can encompass many different aspects of heritage interest: archaeological, industrial, maritime, architectural and ecological where this occurs as part of the historic site. It should cover every aspect of a site's heritage merit, including associated collections.

What is the purpose of a Conservation Plan?

A Conservation Plan is the first step in:

- preparing management proposals
- planning any major repair or restoration schemes
- planning any new developments
- managing a programme of regular maintenance

A Conservation Plan provides a single approach to understanding and managing the heritage significance of a site.

It is particularly useful for large or complex sites that comprise more than one type of heritage asset, such as an historic building with an associated collection and a designed landscape.

The Conservation Plan is a valuable tool in managing the day to day operations and maintenance of a site and can also be used as a baseline against which to evaluate the impact of any new proposals on the heritage merit of the site.

The Conservation Plan and your project

A Conservation Plan should be prepared before you begin to work up a particular project as it should be used to inform the development of your proposals and to provide a benchmark against which to assess options.

In practice, however, some projects are well advanced before a Conservation Plan is drafted. In such cases it is best to stop work on developing the project till the plan is written.

When the plan is finished, compare the project and the plan. If the plan suggests that the project is likely to have an adverse effect on the significance of the site, consider alternative designs. If no alternative is genuinely possible, you will need to justify your choice.

Who should prepare a Conservation Plan?

The Conservation Plan should be a consultative document and is usually the result of team effort, as few individuals will have all the skills needed to prepare a plan.

If you own or manage a site you will need to take the lead and choose a team with the appropriate professional experience. Include people who have a long-term responsibility for the management of the site or delivery of the project, ie the stakeholders. They will be the people who will be responsible for implementing the plans' recommendations and should be given the opportunity to comment on and contribute to the text.

One person, preferably with professional conservation experience, should be responsible for co-ordinating and writing the Conservation Plan. The rest of the team will vary, according to the scale and complexity of the site, and may include archaeologists, architects, museum curators and conservators, countryside and property managers, ecologists, landscape architects or architectural historians. Somebody with experience in conservation planning and heritage legislation will also be useful.

Plan the stages

Take time at the outset to organise the preparation of the Conservation Plan. Once you have selected your team, agree the areas of responsibility and set out a schedule to accomplish the tasks involved.

The main stages are as follows:

- identify the different types of heritage on your site
- decide what information will be needed in the plan

- write a brief for the plan, and be sure your partners are content with it*
- agree who will co-ordinate writing of the plan and appoint specialists as needed
- gather the information, including maps, plans, illustrations and photographs
- start writing, avoiding jargon and obscure technical terms
- challenge previous assumptions about the site – if appropriate
- consult widely on the draft plan, allowing plenty of time for comments
- revise and edit the plan taking consultees views on board
- publish the final draft, ensuring that the authorship and date are clearly marked
- consult again, if necessary
- ask the major stakeholders formally to adopt the plan

Consultation

The strength of the Conservation Plan will be directly related to the amount of support it has gained. You should therefore schedule plenty of time for general consultation and undertake it in clearly identified stages. Draft copies of the text might be shown to:

- the local authority Conservation Officer
- the relevant statutory and non-statutory advisers
- partners in your project
- others involved in owning or managing parts of the site
- other relevant conservation professionals – especially if you have no expertise in those areas

-
- the local community and other interested amenity groups

How much detail do you need in a Conservation Plan?

The Conservation Plan should contain enough information about the place or heritage asset to enable you or your professional advisers to be confident that you know:

- what exactly survives
- statutory and non-statutory designation
- why it is significant, in general, and at a more detailed level
- which areas are sensitive to change and why
- the opportunities and risks presented
- what uses are appropriate
- any relevant conservation or statutory guidance
- how to manage it in order to retain, enhance or recover its significance

In deciding how much information you will need, think about which decisions you need to make now and which decisions you may need to make in the future. These questions will guide how much information you need. You cannot include everything in a Conservation Plan, so summarise existing information, state what is known, identify any gaps and say how they will be filled.

Ideally, the plan should be less than 50 pages but if too short, it is likely to have missed out vital issues that could delay a project or cause problems later. Some plans, particularly those for complex sites, may be longer but detailed

supporting information may be placed in appendices at the back of the document.

How should the plan look?

A Conservation Plan should be well presented, clear and easy to read. Illustrations such as maps, paintings and photographs can demonstrate points which otherwise require lengthy written descriptions. The source and date should be clearly marked on each item.

Avoid formats larger than A4 that cannot be easily filed or stored, although folded A3 reductions of drawings may be needed. The plan will almost certainly have to be photocopied so its pages should be easy to remove from their binding and easy to reassemble. Please ensure that any pictures reproduce well, and if you use colour illustrations, remember that the plan may have to be photocopied in black and white.

Number the pages, sections and figures, caption illustrations and provide a list of contents. Make sure the text and figures are referenced.

Why does a Conservation Plan need to be adopted?

One of the most important parts of the Conservation Plan process is adoption. The major stakeholders in any project must formally adopt the Conservation Plan and the policies it contains. This may not be easy, as there are often conflicting pressures on those who care for a site. However, unless a plan has been formally adopted it carries little weight.

2 Content of a plan

All historic sites are different so your Conservation Plan should be tailored to reflect the special character of your site, and of the scope of your activities. The following framework will help you to plan your own document.

Contents page

Provide a clear and complete list of the contents of your Conservation Plan.

Section 1 Summary

Although this is the first section, it should be written last. It should provide a single page overview of the results of the Conservation Plan and include:

- a brief statement on the heritage merit of the site as well as any statutory or non-statutory designations
- a summary of how that merit is sensitive or vulnerable
- a summary of your policies for conserving and managing the site
- the date that the plan was adopted

If you have already prepared a scheme or development project, you should also summarise:

- to what extent your project is in accordance with your conservation policies
- any modifications which may be needed in the light of these

Section 2 Background

This should include:

- a brief introduction to the asset
- a short note of who your organisation/partnership is and how they

are involved in the site

- a note of any statutory or non-statutory designations
- the reasons for preparing the Conservation Plan and how you intend to use it
- the scope of the plan and any limitations on the study
- who has prepared the plan
- whether or not the plan has been prepared in conjunction with other documents, such as a management plan or collections policy
- a note of the consultation process
- a statement concerning the adoption of the plan by the major stakeholders

Section 3 Understanding the historic site

This section of the plan will show which aspects of the site are important.

Understanding a site should be the first stage in any conservation project. This usually involves research, and identifying opportunities and constraints. Some information almost always exists for any site of heritage importance, but there will usually be gaps in this information. You will have to draw together existing information and, if necessary, commission specialist research to fill in any gaps.

Research should be seen as a positive part of the management process, rather than a luxury.

Understanding the site will involve gathering two types of evidence:

- background research – pulling together documentary information including published or unpublished research, previous reports, oral history, maps, accounts of previous work, plans, historic photographs or illustrations
- fieldwork – a survey of the landscape, wildlife, geology, soils, buildings, archaeology, collections, townscape character, scientific interest or technology

Before you can write this section of the plan you will need to:

- identify the different sorts of information required and if necessary commission specialist help
- gather together all existing information, including copies of illustrations, photographs, old maps or paintings that make relevant points. Any previous research such as archaeological evaluations, building records, historical research, species records, past management or land use history should also be drawn together, summarised and referenced
- fill in the gaps in information. For example, if you manage a museum collection in an historic building, you may need further information about the history and development of that building prior to its use as a museum. Or you may need to find out about the ecological significance, land use history

and landscape value of the setting of an ancient monument

- study the site on the ground in order to identify everything of importance. You might need to commission an ecological or non-invasive archaeological survey, study the building and its interiors, assess the landscape or a collection. For many sites, the best way of illustrating this study is to produce a map or large-scale drawing, using it to show what is important about the site

This section of the plan should include:

- a general description of why the site is of interest
- an understanding of how it has changed through time. Explain the sequence of changes from the earliest period to the present day. Provide habitat and species accounts if it is of ecological significance. Identify past management regimes, and previous works of repair and conservation
- a more detailed description or survey of each of the elements of a site, what we know about them from documents and what they contribute to our understanding of the site as a whole. This information could be set out in a table in an appendix in order to keep the main plan short
- areas where a full understanding of a site's significance cannot yet be assessed

Support your descriptions with photographs, historic and modern maps, diagrams and other relevant illustrative material.

Section 4 Assessment of Significance/Heritage Merit

This can be the most difficult section of a Conservation Plan to write because it involves making judgements about precisely how and why an asset is significant.

An asset can be important for many different reasons. Its formal status as an ancient monument, listed building, registered park or garden, conservation area or Site of Special Scientific Interest is a key indicator of significance. But not all places that are of heritage merit are formally designated, and those that are designated may be important in other ways as well. The plan should go beyond any formal designation to assess all of the different ways in which a place is significant, and also be able to appreciate how each of the constituent elements is important.

Sites may be of heritage merit for their:

- archaeological potential or importance
- architectural history or design significance
- association with historic and/or cultural events
- community, commemorative or social value
- collections/paintings/furniture
- ecological or wildlife value
- educational or public potential
- public or recreational value
- contribution to townscape character
- interest as a designed landscape

- natural or aesthetic beauty
- contribution to technological history
- combination of any of the above

Your Assessment of Significance should include:

- a general statement about the significance of the site as a whole, setting it in its local, regional, national or international context, which refers to each of the main features, cultural or land use phases. The statement should assess the contribution that it makes to our wider appreciation of the town or countryside, and to our understanding of architecture, history, archaeology, technology, society, or ecology
- a more detailed breakdown of the significance of each of the elements of the site identified in Section 3. Perhaps using a table and a grading system to establish the special interest of each element, how intact it is and the contribution it makes to the wider significance of the site. Identify features that are intrusive or detract from the significance

Section 5 Defining Issues (vulnerability)

This section of the plan should identify the issues that have affected the significance of the site in the past, affect it now or may do so in the future.

Those issues could be:

- physical condition – eg summary of results of structural survey and note of repair and conservation needs of the site, collections or machinery and their completeness

-
- ownership and present management – what are the objectives and aspirations of the current owner or occupier?
 - use – how is current management, building function or land-use affecting the significance of the site? Is it appropriate? Does it create conflicts? Does current ownership restrict the uses to which the site can be put?
 - area and boundaries – is the site in your ownership of an appropriate size, and does it include all of the important heritage features. Are there conflicts over land-use? Are species numbers and habitat size viable? Are key features of the heritage item in separate ownership?
 - siting – if the subject of the plan is moveable, eg a ship, what constraints or benefits arise from its current position?
 - resources – what available or procurable resources are there for the care of the asset? Is the availability of resources a problem – if so, why?
 - external factors – are there external factors affecting the significance or appreciation of the asset, such as visual intrusion, pollution, inappropriate neighbouring management regimes or site uses, traffic noise?
 - understanding – lack of understanding of the asset's significance can lead to inadvertent damage. Are there any parts where further survey or investigation may be needed in order to assist management? Are the appropriate skills available to the present management team/owner?
 - previous alterations – past approaches to conservation may have occasionally done more harm than good. Are there positive lessons to be learnt from previous work? Are there techniques or materials that have not been appropriate or have failed after a period of time?
 - public and community expectations – many sites have a high public profile, and visitors or local communities may expect a certain level of access or facilities such as toilets, services or catering which may be difficult to accommodate. Particular events or times of the year may be important. It is useful to identify these pressures. Local sensibilities may require good public relations, especially when undertaking work which may be perceived as damaging, eg felling trees
 - access – how accessible is the site? Does this create problems? Are there demands for car parking, increased access for disabled people, retention of footpaths which themselves could conflict with the architectural or landscape qualities of the site?
 - statutory controls – what legislation is relevant? What restraints and controls are there on the use?
 - areas of conflict – having identified each of the ways in which a site is important, you may find that there are areas of conflict between competing values or uses. The environmental and security needs of collections for example, may create requirements that affect the significance of the fabric of an historic building.
- Take a critical, long-term view of what is happening to the significance of the site, and if possible, explore the idea of

environmental capacities and thresholds. Some of these may have quite a minor impact on a daily basis, but if extrapolated over a five, 25- or 50-year timescale, may have a much greater impact. Although some of the issues may revolve around the availability of financial resources, the focus of this section should be on how the significance of the site is vulnerable.

Whether or not you are considering restoring your site, you should use this section of the Conservation Plan to look at the impact which earlier management practices or changes have had on the significance of the site. All historic sites have altered through time, and often those alterations are of interest in their own right. You will need to have a thorough understanding of previous changes, and their importance, if you are considering restoration by removing later work.

When you come to write this section of the plan make sure you have included each aspect of the heritage of the site.

Do not be selective – you should analyse all of the factors affecting the site, not just those with which you or your partners can deal easily.

Finally – if it is appropriate, do not be afraid to be self-critical of past approaches to conservation that might not always be those that we would choose today.

Section 6 Conservation Policies

Conservation policies are the heart of the Conservation Plan. We have to ensure that projects will preserve, maintain or enhance the heritage merit of the asset and the Conservation Plan shows us how you will do that.

The conservation policies that you put forward under this section should also be consistent with:

- heritage and environmental legislation
- statutory local planning policies or cultural/heritage policies
- other relevant conservation advice and guidance
- collections requirements
- other relevant requirements for health & safety, disabled access, and building control
- your organisation's aims and objectives in relation to the site

They will flow logically from your Assessment of Significance (Section 4) and your identification of the way in which that significance is vulnerable (Section 5).

Conservation policies should aim to:

- define a 'vision' for the site
- retain the significance of the site or collections
- identify appropriate uses
- prioritise repair and conservation
- define an appropriate conservation philosophy
- satisfy statutory requirements
- work within available resources
- enhance public appreciation through presentation and interpretation
- maintain the site so as to prevent future damage or deterioration

- influence future intervention

Depending on the nature of the site, you may also wish to write policies that show how you can:

- provide visitor facilities and services
- improve disabled and other access
- reduce dependence on the use of private transport as a contribution to environmental sustainability without damaging the heritage merit of the site.

The structure of this section of the Conservation Plan will vary, according to the individual type of asset. Policies should relate to each of the heritage areas, as well as to specific elements.

If you have a particular project in mind, it can be tempting to draft policies that do no more than support your project. Conservation policies must involve an objective appraisal of the needs of the significance of the site, and should not be used to justify a particular pre-determined course of action.

Section 7 Implementation and Review

Use this section to explain how the plan will be used and how you intend to review it.

Our understanding of a site or collection changes through time, as do conservation techniques and philosophies. This does not diminish the importance of preparing a Conservation Plan – it enhances it, by recognising that conservation is a dynamic process with changing priorities. Expect to review your Conservation Plan within five years.

Appendices

Use these to present detailed information summarised elsewhere in the Conservation Plan, such as:

- the detailed survey
- information about statutory designations, including copies of relevant documents or maps
- research which is directly relevant to the Conservation Plan
- bibliography of sources
- technical reports (eg condition survey, mechanical and electrical inspections, security reports, quinquennial survey)
- copies of essential survey or record drawings
- results of visitor surveys
- copies of specialist conservation studies, such as building analysis and recording, landscape assessment, ecological and other surveys

3 After drafting

Once you have prepared your Conservation Plan there are different ways in which you can use it.

1 To assess the impact of an existing project

Sometimes you may need to revisit an existing project in the light of a Conservation Plan.

Where there is already a project or management proposals, you can help us to assess the impact of your project by preparing a Heritage Impact Assessment.

A Heritage Impact Assessment identifies whether a project will have an adverse effect on the heritage merit of a site, and if it does, suggests measures to reduce that impact.

If you already have a Conservation Plan, a heritage impact assessment can be set out as a simple table, see below.

Use your architect or professional adviser's specification to identify the 'Proposed Work' and your 'Assessment of Significance' to fill in the third column.

Mitigation means finding ways in which you can avoid or minimise any damage to your site.

Mitigation strategies could include:

- finding an alternative site for the work or not doing that part of the work
- exploring design alternatives
- carrying out more detailed investigation before finalising the project
- including conservation professionals in the design or management team
- carrying out an archaeological excavation before work or a watching brief during work

2 To prepare detailed management proposals

If your project involves site management, specific costed management proposals should arise from the policies set out in your Conservation Plan.

For smaller projects the Conservation Plan may include detailed management proposals. But in general, a Conservation Plan is a long term, strategic document, and should outlive any particular package of work or maintenance.

Proposed work	Relevant Conservation Policy	Significance of element affected by work	Possible impact of work	Mitigation
Specific works envisaged	Refer to policies in Conservation Plan	Refer to significance section of plan	Assess impact in light of plan	Suggest design alternatives, or archaeological mitigation

Heritage impact assessment table

3 To prepare a Restoration Project

If you intend to restore a site to an earlier appearance by removing later changes you will need to justify your proposals against the conservation policies in your plan.

The information in the Conservation Plan should help you to demonstrate how your proposals will retain the historic character of the site.

4 To prepare a development project

As a result of preparing a Conservation Plan you and your professional advisers should have a much clearer idea of all of the opportunities and constraints provided by the site, the areas of sensitivity, the relevant legislation and the policies which will shape your new project.

The Conservation Plan should form part of the design brief to your architect or other professional adviser and should be used to inform any proposals for new buildings or the re-use of existing structures on the site.

Use your Conservation Plan to help you make decisions, prioritise work, devise new interpretation or help in education.

Give copies to professional advisers, statutory agencies, the local planning authority, the sites and monuments record, and community groups.

If you are making an application to us to fund a new project, we will want to make sure that your proposals flow from your Conservation Plan and are consistent with the Conservation policies that have been identified and agreed.

Further reading

Countryside Commission, *Site Management Planning: A Guide*. Cheltenham: Countryside Commission. 1997.

Countryside Commission, Countryside Council for Wales, *National Park Management Plans Guidance*. CCP 525. 1997.

Countryside Council for Wales, *Guide to the Production of Management Plans for Nature Reserves and Protected areas*, Bangor: Countryside Council for Wales. 1996.

English Heritage, *Development in the Historic Environment*. 1997.

Feilden, B. and Jokilehto, J. *Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites*. Rome: ICCROM, UNESCO, ICOMOS. 1993.

Heritage Lottery Fund, *Recommended brief to applicants and historic landscape consultants*, 1997.

Historic Scotland, *The Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas*, Edinburgh: 1993.

Kerr, James Semple, *The Conservation Plan: A guide to the preparation of conservation plans for places of European cultural significance*. Sydney: National Trust of Australia. 1996

Museum & Galleries Commission, *Standards for Larger & Working Objects*. Second edition. 1997.

Examples of Conservation Plans

There are many Conservation Plans in preparation in the UK at present, but most of these are not yet in the public domain. Your HLF case officer may be able to assist by identifying appropriate plans that you can see.

Template for a Conservation Plan

This includes the main areas of information HLF requires in a Conservation Plan, but please adapt it to the needs of your particular heritage asset.

1 Summary

A brief single page statement summarising the main conclusions of the plan

2 Background

Authorship and circumstances of the plan

The scope of the plan and any limitations on the study

Relationship with other relevant plans

A note of the consultation process

Statement concerning the adoption of the plan by the major stakeholders

3 Understanding the asset

An analysis of the site which draws together documentary and physical evidence and is illustrated with images, maps and phase plans

Brief history

Main historical or land use phases

Description of important features

4 Assessment of significance

Assess the significance of the asset both generally and in detail for each of its main components, making value judgements about the degree of historical, biological, wildlife, geological, cultural, aesthetic, archaeological, technological, social (recreational, public) and other types of significance.

Overall summary of significance

Detailed breakdown of significance of components

Statutory status of all or parts and how this contributes to significance

5 Defining Issues (vulnerability)

Details of the issues that have affected the significance of the site in the past, affect it now or may do so in the future. Identify any possible conflicts between different uses or heritage areas

6 Conservation Policies

Puts forward policies for the conservation of all aspects of the significance of the asset, which show how you will:

retain its significance

identify appropriate uses

prioritise repair and conservation

define a conservation philosophy

satisfy statutory requirements

work within available resources

enhance public appreciation

maintain and manage it

influence future intervention

policies may also relate to the provision of new services, new uses or increased access

7 Implementation and review

Identifies the next steps, including a strategy for implementing the Conservation Plan

Explains how, by whom and when the Conservation Plan will be reviewed

8 Appendices

Detailed information summarised elsewhere