

Archaeological Building Recording Guidance Note

An archaeological building recording may be requested in order to advise on the conservation, alteration, repair or management of a building/structure or to provide a permanent archive/record ahead of change or destruction.

The justification for requesting such a record is outlined in Paragraphs 194 and 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework:

194. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

205. Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible⁶⁹. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

⁶⁹ Copies of evidence should be deposited with the relevant historic environment record, and any archives with a local museum or other public depository.

Historic Building Recording

The scope of the historic building recording works required may be specified as an outcome of a pre-application request submission or set out as a condition of planning consent granted by the Planning Authority.

The usual wording of such a condition is: "No development to which this permission (or consent) relates shall commence until an appropriate programme of historic building recording and analysis has been secured and implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out at all times in strict accordance with the approved scheme, or such other details as may be subsequently agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority." And the reason being 'To ensure that an appropriate record is made of the historic building fabric that may be affected by the development'

The principal objective of the programme shall be to make a record of the historic building prior to the commencement of the development. However, subsequent recording may be

required during the course of the proposed works where previously obscured historic fabric or architectural features are exposed by such works.

Level of recording

Building recording can be requested to comply with 4 levels as set out by Historic England:

Level 1 – a basic visual record supplemented by the minimum of information needed to identify the building's location, age and type. This is the simplest record, not normally an end in itself but contributing to a wider aim.

Level 2 – a descriptive record. Both exterior and interior will be viewed, described and photographed. The record will present conclusions regarding the building's development and use. A plan and other drawings may be made but the drawn record will normally not be comprehensive.

Level 3 – an analytical record. Includes an introductory description, account of origins, development and use. An account of evidence, drawn and photographic records, draws on readily accessible documentary sources but will not include a detailed documentary search.

Level 4 – comprehensive analytical record for buildings of special importance. Will draw on all available resources and will discuss the building's significance in architectural, social, regional and economic history terms.

Report

The building recording report **must** include the following:

- Location plan, grid ref and plan of site showing position of survey elements
- A full description of and an interpretation of the buildings, setting them where appropriate into their archaeological, architectural, historical and research context using information from archival sources and the Historic Environment Record (HER)
- Drawn (where requested) and photographic records (min 24 megapixels using Digital SLR, file format jpg for presentation, TIFF for archive) to illustrate the building's appearance and structure and to support an historical analysis. The scale of the drawings derived from a survey must be appropriate to the building, typically 1:100 or 1:50 for plans, 1:50 or 1:20 for sections
- Plan showing location of all archived photographs
- Plans and sections of building if available from architect or if requested to be produced specially
- Selected images from the photographic record
- The photographic record should include:
 - General views of the building in its wider setting or landscape
 - The building's external appearance – typically a series of oblique views. Where an individual elevation embodies complex historical information, views at right angles to the plane of the elevation may also be appropriate

- Detailed close-up coverage of the building's external appearance – windows, doors, decorative detail etc
- Overall appearance of each room and circulation areas
- Internal close-up detail, structural and decorative – windows, doors, fireplaces etc
- Any dates or other inscriptions which contribute to an understanding of the building or its fixtures or machinery.
- Any building contents which have a significant bearing on the building's history
- Where a drawn record is required:
 - Cross- sections through principal structural unit
 - Scale drawings recording form and location of significant structural detail
 - Drawings to show the form/profile of any architectural decoration
- an index to the archive as thumbnail images in the final report and information on how the archive can be accessed
- Deposition of the report with the *Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS)* project.

In certain situations, for example when the significance of the heritage asset is predicated on its artistic or historic association with events, people or movements, then the building recording report **should**, where possible, include the following:

- Recordings (sound and/or video), contemporary or historic, of performances or significant events or of individuals who worked/occupied the building. It is recognised that this may not always be achievable. However, this objective must be considered at the planning stage of a building recording exercise.

Archive

The long term care of the archive must be provided for. Digital archive must be prepared for deposition with and curation by the Great London Historic Environment Record (HER) and Archaeology Data Services (ADS) (<https://www.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>). ADS will charge a fee and have strict metadata requirements. The fee for this should be costed appropriately into the project.

See the ADS website for guidance on information accepted and data formats to be used.

A PDF copy of the report and JPEG images should, as a matter of course, be sent to the Greater London HER (glher@HistoricEngland.org.uk).

All work must be carried out in compliance with the codes of practice of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and must follow the ClfA Standards and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures, revised 2020 (<https://www.archaeologists.net/codes/cifa>).

Bibliography

Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/understanding-historic-buildings/>