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Contents

Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i to ii, pages 1 to 36, an inside back cover and a back cover.

Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 31st December 2013. It was prepared by Technical Committee *B/560 Conservation of tangible cultural heritage.* A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

Supersession

This British Standard supersedes BS 7913:1998, which is withdrawn.

Information about this document

This British Standard does not cover the legislation required prior to undertaking many conservation works.

Use of this document

As a guide, this British Standard takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a specification or a code of practice and claims of compliance cannot be made to it.

It has been assumed in the preparation of this British Standard that the execution of its provisions will be entrusted to appropriately qualified and experienced people, for whose use it has been produced.

Presentational conventions

The guidance in this standard is presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Any recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is "should".

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

0 Introduction

0.1 General

The immediate objective of building conservation is to secure the protection of built heritage, in the long-term interest of society.

Issues relating to building conservation are often complex and interwoven.

The conservation of historic buildings requires judgement based on an understanding of principles informed by experience and knowledge to be exercised when decisions are made. British Standards that are applicable to newer buildings might be inappropriate.

The decision to conserve historic buildings can be justified on social, cultural, economic and/or environmental grounds, and usually a combination of these. Conflicting pressures often need to be balanced to assist good decision making. Good conservation depends on a sound research evidence base and the use of competent advisors and contractors.

See Figure 1 for a flowchart showing conservation process.

The history of building conservation is summarized in **0.2** to **0.9**.

0.2 Vernacular building

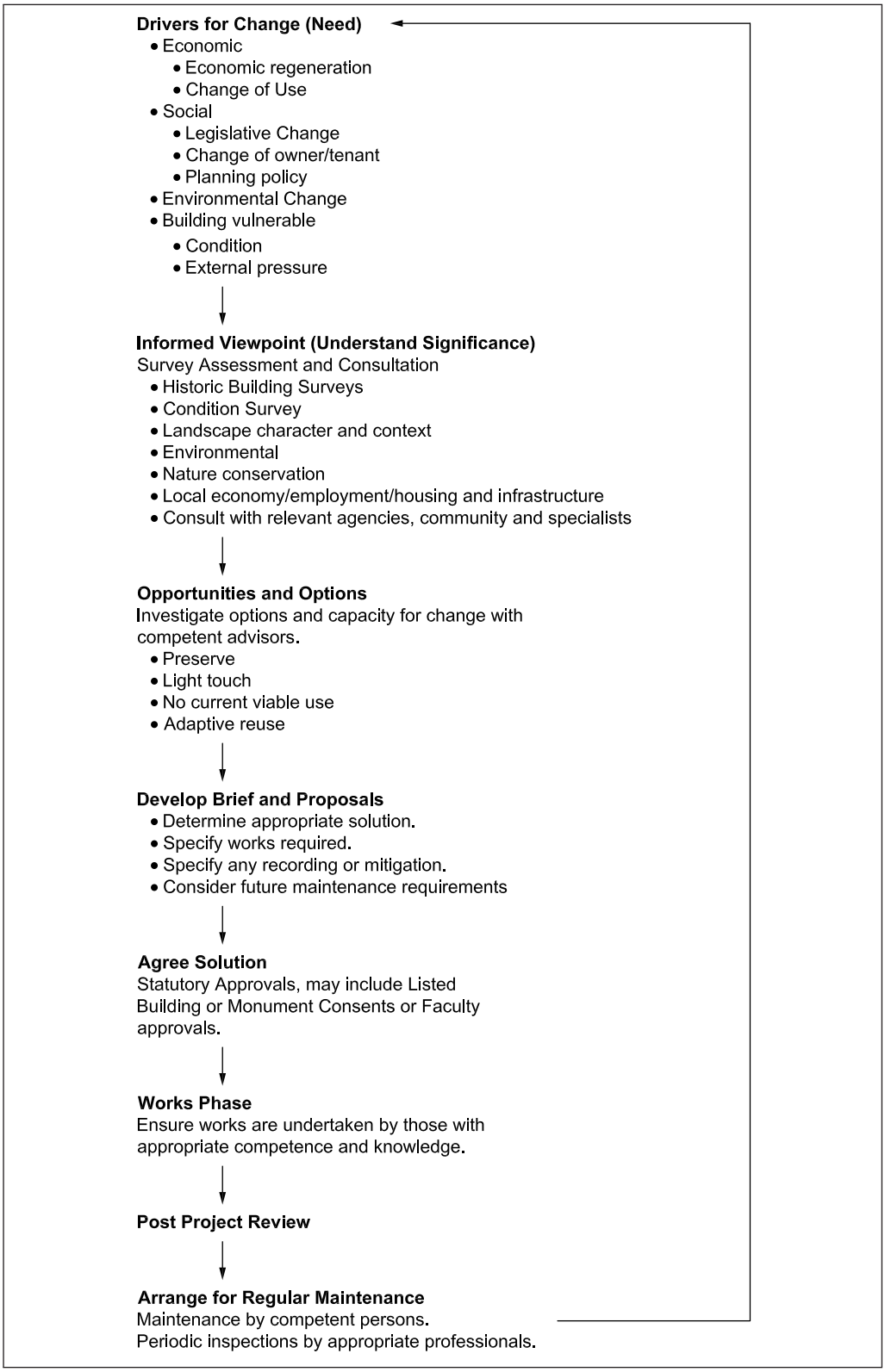
When people first began to build they built for themselves, without the aid of specialist builders. What they built was, in the precise meaning of the term, "vernacular" (i.e. native or of the country). The system by which the people of a particular place built was developed empirically over many generations, closely integrated with geology, climate, land use and seasonal patterns.

Even the more refined ways of building were subject to the same local and vernacular influences. This is the basis of what can be termed the architectural geography of the United Kingdom. The local and vernacular materials and construction of buildings contribute to a sense of place.

0.3 Architecture as cultural expression

The aim of builders throughout the ages has been to produce buildings which were as well-built as they could be with the materials and skills available. These served the needs of the people who used and occupied them, and their form and decoration were refined as a means of cultural expression. In the first century BCE the Roman architect Vitruvius defined the three essential attributes of architecture as "commodity, firmness and delight". The integration and balancing of function, sound construction, economics and aesthetics remains the objective of all architectural activity. Buildings of all types and periods contain information about the way in which people lived, worked and worshipped, how they built and how they thought and wished to present their own culture and their spiritual values.

Figure 1 **Conservation process**



0.4 The artisan tradition

With the growth of the trades, building practice advanced steadily and became more standardized and subject to regional, national and international cultural influences. While some rural buildings, particularly in more remote parts of the country, remained self-built in the local tradition (and therefore genuinely vernacular) until the beginning of the twentieth century, most ordinary town, village and estate building in the post-mediaeval period was by carpenters, masons and bricklayers, often with the aid of pattern books, and is therefore termed artisan. The empirical development and refinement of building practice in response to changing needs and circumstances was continued by the trades until the onset of the industrial age. The architecture and the craftsmanship of many of these buildings are of a very high order.

0.5 Fine architecture

Societies, communities and powerful people of all periods have used their principal buildings as a means of expressing their authority, sanctity, wealth and/or sophistication. The fine architecture that a society produces is a reflection of its culture and ethos. Although such buildings were commonly built from local materials and by the local trades, they were often designed by people who could be described as architects. The architecture of these buildings tended to be sophisticated, fashionable, and express national cultural characteristics and often international influences which were representative of the intellectual orientation, political or trading alliances of the time. Fine architecture represents the high culture of the age in which it was created.

0.6 The age of industry

The rapid development of Britain's power in the 19th century through a combination of empire and industrialization led to a major increase in the total quantity of building, largely, but not only, in cities. This led to major technical advances in the mechanization of building in traditional materials, through the introduction of Portland cement and the use of iron and steel, particularly in large engineering structures such as bridges and train sheds, but also in the development of framed buildings. Throughout much of this period, however, the artisan building tradition continued. All types of 19th century buildings survive in use throughout the United Kingdom in very large numbers, and make up a substantial part of the fabric of present day towns and cities.

0.7 War, modernism and planning

Largely as a consequence of the two world wars, the 20th century has seen development and change at a rate of a different order to that of any previous period. In the course of the century the building trades, ways of building and attitudes to urban development changed substantially.

As the cost of labour and skill increased and the price of energy fell dramatically, builders increasingly used mechanized and industrialized methods based on the rapid assembly of large and small factory-made components and cast-in-situ concrete. Such was the confidence in the new technology, it was believed for a time that in the future all buildings would be replaced by new ones at least once per century. Traditional building methods were rejected, misunderstood or forgotten. Maintenance was superseded by renewal and towns were threatened with wholesale redevelopment. The rapid growth of the architectural conservation movement was in response to this, and became part of a wider environmental movement. Pressure for renewal receded and the desirability of retaining sound buildings, particularly historic buildings, gained wide acceptance. Modern architecture, as that of any other period, evokes the spirit of the age which produced it. As much of it was not designed to last or to be maintained, the conservation of post-war listed buildings presents new technical challenges.

0.8 The conservation movement

The conservation movement has its origins in 18th century enlightenment, antiquarianism and romanticism. It developed in the 19th century through The Manifesto for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings [1] written in 1877 by William Morris, The Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882 [2] and the founding of the National Trust.

In the 20th century, the consolidation of ruins and the care of ancient sites by the State were developed by HM Office of Works, while accelerating change led to the growth of preservation and amenity societies. After 1945 the listing and legal protection of buildings was established through a succession of Town and Country Planning Acts [3]. This growth of interest in buildings and landscapes of cultural heritage was matched by increasing concern for the natural heritage and pressure to control pollution, ecological damage and resource consumption. Together these make up the modern conservation movement.

0.9 Conservation today

International recognition of the importance of building conservation was achieved in 1966 with the publication of the *Venice Charter* by ICOMOS [4], followed in 1981 by the *Burra Charter* of ICOMOS Australia [5] while the fundamental description of the process was enshrined in the 1993 ICOMOS *Guidelines for education and training in the conservation of monuments, ensembles and sites* [6]. This and subsequent standards on structural intervention on historic buildings remain the common standard for built and historic conservation, to which Great Britain and Northern Ireland have added their own conservation principles documents [7, 8].

1 Scope

This British Standard describes best practice in the management and treatment of historic buildings. It is applicable to historic buildings with and without statutory protection. It is not applicable to below ground archaeology or any other type of heritage asset such as movable objects or vehicles.

This British Standard is intended for those who own, use, occupy and manage historic buildings, the professional team's contractors and others employed to work on their behalf, and can be used by decision makers and funders. It is intended to provide building owners, managers, archaeologists, architects, engineers, surveyors, contractors, conservators, planners, conservation officers and local authority building control officers with general background information on the principles of the conservation of historic buildings and sites, when setting conservation policy, management strategy and procedures.