

Detailed Guidance Notes

PART 2

Conservation Principles

CHAPTER 7



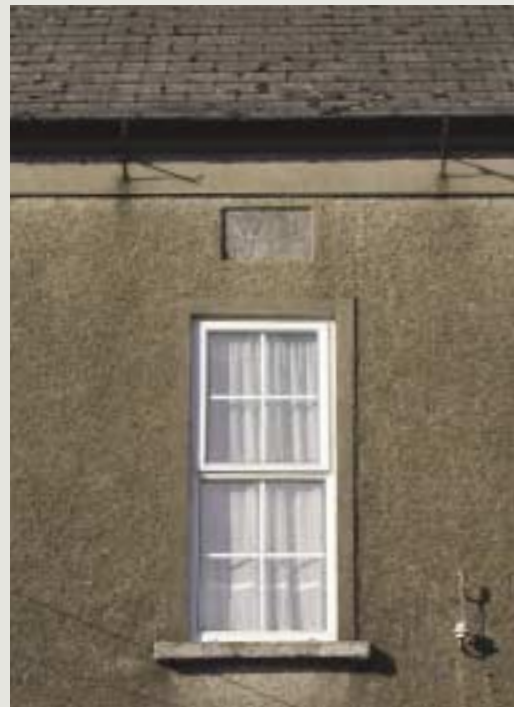
7.1 Purpose of the Detailed Guidance Notes

- 7.1.1 The purpose of the detailed guidance notes in Part 2 is to assist planning authorities in the identification of structures or parts of structures which are of special interest, in the writing of declarations and in the consideration of applications for planning permission involving works to protected structures and to buildings within ACAs. The aim is to achieve a consistency of approach to the conservation and protection of the architectural heritage and to set out the standards of architectural conservation supported by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- 7.1.2 The advice contained in these detailed guidance notes falls into two categories. Guidance included under the sub-headings 'Identifying special features for protection' is intended to assist a planning authority in identifying structures or parts of structures which are of special interest. It draws attention to features of a structure which may contribute to its character and/or the character of an ACA. Identification of such features will help in the selection of structures for inclusion in the RPS and in writing declarations.
- 7.1.3 The guidance sub-headed 'Consideration of proposals' is intended to assist a planning authority in meeting its development objectives of protecting the architectural heritage and preserving the character of ACAs. It will aid the assessment of the potential effects of development applications on the character of a protected structure and/or the character of an ACA. It is also intended to guide a planning authority in writing conditions which may be attached to a grant of permission.

7.2 Conservation Principles

- 7.2.1 Conservation is the process of caring for buildings and places and of managing change to them in such a way as to retain their character and special interest. Historic structures are a unique resource. Once lost, they cannot be replaced. If their special qualities are degraded, these can rarely be recaptured. Damage can be caused to the character of a historic structure as much by over-attention as by neglect. Over-restoration can harm the special qualities of a building with the loss of details, materials and craftsmanship which, while sometimes seeming of little significance in themselves, can contribute to the character of the building and make it special. For this reason, it is vitally important

that proposals for works to protected structures, and within ACAs, be examined at a detailed level. It is intended these detailed guidance notes will draw attention to the importance of the seemingly minor details of a historic building that nonetheless play an important part in establishing its character.



Over-restoration or poorly specified replacement elements can be as much a threat to the character of historic structures as neglect or wilful damage. In this case, the datestone of 1736 is one of the few surviving original features on the exterior of this house

- 7.2.2 Entry into the Record of Protected Structures does not mean that a structure is forever frozen in time. Good conservation practice allows a structure to evolve and adapt to meet changing needs while retaining its particular significance. The challenge facing owners, planning authorities and all others involved in architectural conservation is to identify how and where change can occur and to ensure that the heritage is not damaged by inappropriate intervention. Additions and other interventions should be sympathetic to the earlier structure and of quality in themselves and should not cause damage to the fabric of the structure, whether in the long or short term.

7.3 Keeping a Building in Use

7.3.1 It is generally recognised that the best method of conserving a historic building is to keep it in active use. Where a structure is of great rarity or quality, every effort should be made to find a solution which will allow it to be adapted to a new use without unacceptable damage to its character and special interest. Usually the original use for which a structure was built will be the most appropriate, and to maintain that use will involve the least disruption to its character. While a degree of compromise will be required in adapting a protected structure to meet the requirements of modern living, it is important that the special interest of the structure is not unnecessarily affected. Where a change of use is approved, every effort should be made to minimise change to, and loss of, significant fabric and the special interest of the structure should not be compromised.

7.3.2 Where a protected structure is a ruin and does not have an active use, it may nonetheless be of special interest. It may be a local landmark or contribute to the character of an ACA. In such cases, it may be more appropriate to allow it to continue to stand in a ruined state and be repaired or consolidated where necessary.

7.4 Researching and Analysing

7.4.1 Before formulating proposals for works to a protected structure, the developer should research its historical development and understand thoroughly the present condition of the structure. The research should encompass not only the main structure and its interior but also its curtilage and attendant grounds, where relevant, and any structures or features within them which contribute to the special interest of the protected structure. The contribution of the setting of the structure to its special interest should also be assessed, as should any other relationships which add to the appreciation of it.

7.4.2 The research should include an analysis of the physical fabric of the site, and any available documentary or other evidence. The work should only be undertaken by those with the appropriate knowledge and skill. The results of the research should be analysed in order to understand the reasons for any decay and to inform future proposals.



Buildings should be kept in active use, preferably the original use. Where this is not possible, permitted changes of use should aim to minimise the impact on the character of the structure, as with this former gaol observation tower, which is now in education-related office use



Some protected structures such as bridges, follies and other iconic landmarks are strong, self-contained compositions that may be difficult to alter without affecting their character and special interest

7.5 Using Expert Conservation Advice

7.5.1 Building conservation is a specialised discipline and the method of work needs to be specified by experts with a knowledge and experience of historic buildings. Planning authorities, when discussing proposals with the owners or occupiers of protected structures, should encourage them to seek expert advice when considering undertaking works to their buildings. Where a protected structure is of particularly high quality or rarity, the use of conservation expertise by an applicant could be a condition of any grant of planning permission.

7.5.2 The input of expert advice should not be confined to the planning application process. In order to ensure that the works are competently and correctly completed, continued expert involvement may be necessary in the management and site supervision of the project, using experienced and skilled workers with proper and adequate supervision.

- 7.5.3 Planning authorities should ensure that they themselves have access to appropriately qualified, competent specialist advice on any development likely to impact on a protected structure. This advice might come from in-house conservation staff or from independent consultants.

7.6 Protecting the Special Interest

- 7.6.1 The character and special interest of a protected structure can be damaged by inappropriate works. Most obviously, a structure can be demolished or partly demolished. It can also be stripped of its value and distinctiveness by neglect and decay, unsuitable alteration, uninformed repair or over-restoration.
- 7.6.2 The blanket application of standard solutions to historic buildings is not appropriate, nor can old buildings be expected to perform in the same way as modern buildings in terms of structural strength, durability of materials or thermal insulation. But old buildings have qualities which modern structures may not have. For example, handmade building materials are evidence of dedication and craftsmanship perhaps no longer achievable today. Other materials, such as a particular type of stone, may no longer be obtainable. Above all, historic buildings have a patina of age which is irreplaceable and cannot be replicated.

7.7 Promoting Minimum Intervention

- 7.7.1 The principle of promoting minimum intervention in a protected structure is best summed up by the maxim 'do as much as necessary and as little as possible'. Dramatic interventions in a protected structure are rarely appropriate. The best work in conservation terms is often that which is low key, involves the least work and can be inexpensive.
- 7.7.2 In granting planning permission, a planning authority should be satisfied that works are necessary, whether these be repair works to the fabric of the building or adaptations to the structure to allow it to perform a new or enhanced function. Over-restoration of historic buildings can be detrimental to their character and value. Old buildings both charm and inform for the very reason that they are old. Bulging or leaning walls, unevenness and bowing are not necessarily imperfections to be ironed out but are evidence of the building's antiquity. Such evidence of a patina of age is irreplaceable and should be preserved where possible with appropriate professional advice.



Uninformed works, even where carried out with care, can irreparably damage the character of a building as with the installation of these inappropriate modern timber windows. Here also the original render has been stripped from the building, a current fashion at odds with the original design intention which furthermore leaves the structure vulnerable to damp ingress



Evidence of the quality of materials and craftsmanship can endure through years of neglect. Where they survive, every effort should be made to retain and repair features of importance to the character of a protected structure or an ACA



Good conservation works should aim to do as much as necessary, yet as little as possible, to a protected structure. The advice of experienced conservation professionals is invaluable and minimal intervention may often prove less expensive than comprehensive refurbishment

- 7.7.3 Conjectural restoration of a protected structure, or part of a structure, should generally only be permitted where there is sufficient physical or documentary evidence of the earlier state of the structure or element or where restoration is necessary to enhance the appreciation of other elements that contribute to the character of the structure. For example, if a Georgian house has in the past had its original roof replaced with a flat roof, the reinstatement of an appropriately designed pitched roof to the building will enhance the appearance of the façade and possibly of a whole terrace of buildings. Similarly, a case may sometimes be made to reinstate a symmetrical composition part of which has previously been lost. The practice of 'restoring' a building or structure to an appearance at some notional date in its history should generally not be permitted, nor should the practices of moving buildings or of reducing them to mere façades be permitted except in exceptional circumstances.
- 7.7.4 The replication of a lost feature may be appropriate in some circumstances where the essential form and detailing are still evident, so that the physical evidence can be used to re-establish the feature as an integral part of the works. For example, where a carved bracket is missing from a shopfront, the profile and material of the missing feature may be determined from a surviving bracket elsewhere on the same shopfront. A replacement feature should harmonise with its surroundings and it should be a condition that the incorporation of any replacement feature is not to the detriment of later work of quality or interest. Any reconstruction of details should be permitted on a selective rather than a systematic basis.
- 7.7.5 Another acceptable option to replace a lost element would be to incorporate, as a new feature, a design that is sympathetic with the remaining historical features of the building. Where this is permitted, it should be a condition that the new feature take into account the size, scale and material of the building itself, and care should be taken to avoid creating a false historical appearance.



The demolition of all but the façade of a structure will inevitably result in a loss of character and should rarely be considered acceptable. In cases where the façade is the sole surviving feature of a building, any proposal to construct a new building behind that façade should respect the location, not only of existing openings, but also of the original floors and internal walls to avoid an adverse impact on the external appearance of the building



This mid-eighteenth-century house had lost its original windows and the opening sizes had been altered (left). These works had damaged a carefully proportioned classical design. Detailed research, including an analysis of surviving original windows, led to restoration of the openings to their original proportions and the fabrication of historically accurate sashes and frames (above)



Where elements of a composition have been lost, new work should generally avoid creating a false historical appearance while respecting the scale and materials of the surviving fabric, as has happened here in the conversion of a shop to office use

7.8 Respecting Earlier Alterations of Interest

- 7.8.1 Alterations and additions to a structure can themselves be an irreplaceable part of a unique history. Different periods of alteration can inform the social and architectural history of the built heritage. For example, the subsequent addition of porches, balconies, shopfronts and returns can say much about changing fashions in architectural design and social aspiration, as can alterations or embellishments such as the addition of bargeboards, window and door surrounds or dormer windows.
- 7.8.2 In order to appreciate the integrity of a structure, it is important to respect the contribution of different stages of its historical development. Concentration on whether or not various parts of a building are 'original' can obscure the fact that later alterations and additions may also contribute to the special interest of the structure. Of course there may be alterations or additions which have not contributed to the special interest of the building, and which may in fact have damaged it.
- 7.8.3 Where new alterations and additions are proposed to a protected structure, it should be remembered that these will, in their turn, become part of the structure's history and so it is important that these make their own positive contribution by being well designed and constructed.



Alterations of different periods may contribute to a knowledge and appreciation of the history of a structure. The application of plaster hood-mouldings to earlier buildings was fashionable at the end of the nineteenth century. While they may now appear anachronistic, they can also be seen as part of the unique history of that building



The conversion of this 1762 Charter School nursery to a store in the nineteenth century involved partially blocking the window openings, thereby altering its character. Restoring the openings would be possible using surviving evidence in the fabric and employing historically accurate detailing. This approach is appropriate where the character of an architectural composition can be restored by undoing later alterations of little interest



New alterations – as in this conference room with tiered balconies constructed within a mediaeval castle tower – should respect their context and be of high-quality design and specification. In time, such interventions will contribute to the history of the structure

7.9 Repairing Rather than Replacing

- 7.9.1 It should be the aim of good conservation practice to preserve the authentic fabric which contributes to the special interest of the structure. Good repair will arrest the process of decay of a structure and prolong its life without damaging its character and special interest. Where a damaged or deteriorated feature could reasonably be repaired, its replacement should not be permitted.
- 7.9.2 Many historic structures date from a time when the majority of building materials were wrought by hand. These materials have a variety and vitality that cannot be matched by machine-made materials. Tooling and chisel marks on stonework, undulations in blown-glass panes, and adze marks on timber elements supply a wealth of irreplaceable information about the people and the times that produced these structures. Also, through time, a structure and its components acquire a patina of age that cannot be replicated. The unnecessary replacement of historic fabric, no matter how carefully the work is carried out, will have an adverse effect on the character of a building or monument, seriously diminish its authenticity and will significantly reduce its value as a source of historical information. Replacing original or earlier elements of a building with modern replicas only serves to falsify the historical evidence of the building.

7.10 Promoting Honesty of Repairs and Alterations

- 7.10.1 To promote good conservation practice in line with the recommendations of international charters, repairs to a protected building or structure should generally be carried out without attempt at disguise or artificial ageing. This does not mean that the repair should be obtrusive or that inappropriate materials should be used in order to contrast with the historic fabric. A good repair, carried out with skill, leaves an interesting record of works done. Deliberately obscuring alterations confuses the historical record that is the building. New repairs should not detract from the visual integrity of the structure but should be discernible on closer inspection.



The careful repair of a damaged feature such as a cast iron balustrade contributes much to preserving the character of a structure (shown here before and after repair). Where elements are not capable of repair, the new work should accurately reproduce the detail of the original. Entire sections should not be replaced if only a part is damaged



Good conservation practice encourages the honesty of repairs and alterations which may be discernible to the expert eye but not visually obtrusive. This new hopper head was designed to match the style of the structure but is recognisable, on close inspection, as a new element from its 1999 date

7.11 Using Appropriate Materials and Methods

7.11.1 Only appropriate materials and methods should be used in works to a protected structure. In early restoration works of the past, untested materials and techniques, such as the use of cement repointing and of some surface consolidants, actually resulted in the accelerated decay of the building fabric on which they were applied as part of conservation works. The use of modern materials and techniques should only be permitted where their appropriateness is supported by firm scientific evidence or where they have proved themselves over a sufficient period and where traditional alternatives cannot be sourced.

7.11.2 When dealing with planning applications for works to a protected structure, materials, details and specifications for works should be approved by the planning authority prior to the commencement of any works.

7.12 Ensuring Reversibility of Alterations

7.12.1 The use of processes which are reversible, or substantially reversible, when undertaking works to a protected structure is always preferable as this allows for the future correction of unforeseen problems, should the need arise, without lasting damage being caused to the architectural heritage. For example, filling structural voids with concrete would be an irreversible process while a loose fill could easily be removed at a later stage. Similarly, scribing new partitions around an existing cornice or skirting allows for the earlier work to remain intact, possibly to be re-exposed at a future time.

7.12.2 Not all works can be made reversible and a judgement will have to be made by the planning authority where irreversible works are proposed. Ideally, permitted works which affect the character and special interest of a protected structure should be reversible and such works considered temporary, to be reversed when circumstances allow. Such works might include the subdivision of important rooms or spaces within the interior of a protected structure.

7.12.3 The reversibility of proposals is an important conservation principle but should not be used to justify inappropriate interventions.



The restoration of the pioneering cast- and wrought-iron glasshouses at the National Botanic Gardens was preceded by technical and scientific research to ensure that the proposed ironwork repairs would be appropriate in terms of materials and construction



Alterations, particularly those which impact on important elements of a protected structure, should as far as possible be reversible. Internally this can be achieved by scribing partitions around cornices, dado rails and skirting boards. However, the reversibility of a proposal should not be used to justify inappropriate works

7.13 Avoiding Incremental Damage

7.13.1 Thought must be given by the planning authority to the potential cumulative impact of minor works to the character of protected structures and of ACAs. The quality and character of both can be damaged by incremental alterations. In the case of protected structures this applies to both internal and external works.

7.13.2 In an ACA, this principle can apply to a street or area where a precedent becomes established for the removal of architectural features or the addition of extensions. For example, the proposed alteration of the external railings of an individual house and the conversion of its front garden to accommodate car parking may at first appear minor and acceptable. However, the planning authority must consider the effect on the character of an ACA and the setting of other protected structures should substantial numbers of properties also alter historic railings and lose their gardens. Similarly, proposals to demolish existing returns to replace them with larger extensions should be treated with caution.

7.13.3 It can sometimes be difficult to refuse permission for minor works, but a point may be reached when the combined impact of all the small alterations will be considerable and detract substantially from the architectural quality and character of the building or of an area.

7.14 Discouraging the Use of Architectural Salvage from Other Buildings

7.14.1 In granting planning permission for works to historic buildings, including all protected structures, the planning authority should not encourage the use of architectural salvage from other buildings for two reasons. Firstly, the re-use of architectural features from elsewhere can confuse the understanding and appreciation of a building, casting doubt on the authenticity of even the untouched parts of the fabric. Secondly, creating a market for salvaged building materials promotes the dismantling of other old buildings, for example the removal of slates or cut-stone elements from a building for re-use elsewhere.

7.14.2 The planning authority could use the planning process to discourage the use of architectural salvage from other buildings. Promoting the use of newly produced materials such as stone or wrought iron could help to keep them in production or encourage the revival of the craftsmanship associated with these materials. There may be occasions where suitable traditional materials are no longer in production and their production cannot be revived. In such cases, the use of salvaged materials may be appropriate after their provenance has been ascertained.

7.15 Complying with the Building Regulations

7.15.1 The Building Regulations are designed to secure the health and safety of people in and around buildings. The Regulations are set out in twelve parts (Parts A - M, excluding I). They are expressed in performance terms and are backed up by relevant Technical Guidance Documents (TGDs) which give guidance regarding compliance. Apart from a limited number of exemptions, they apply to all works involving new construction, extensions to buildings, material alterations to existing buildings and material change of use of such buildings.



It can often be difficult to resist proposals for minor works which seem of little consequence such as the replacement of windows, doors and roof coverings or the conversion of front gardens to parking bays. However the cumulative effect of such alterations can be destructive to the special interest of a protected structure or of an ACA



This salvaged portico is obviously not a part of the structure it now fronts. However it is not clear if it survives from a previous building on this site or was imported from elsewhere. This has the effect of blurring the historical record. The use of salvaged items can promote the practice of dismantling of other structures capable of repair and it is important to establish the provenance of salvaged material before use

7.15.2 Works carried out in accordance with the guidance in the TGDs will, prima facie, indicate compliance. However, the adoption of an approach other than that outlined in the guidance is not precluded, provided the relevant requirements of the Regulations are complied with. Parts of the Building Regulations which are particularly relevant to works in relation to historic buildings include Part A (Structure), Part B (Fire Safety), Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy) and Part M (Access for People with Disabilities). However, some parts of the Regulations do not apply to a material change of use, for example the requirement in Part A dealing with disproportionate collapse or the requirements of Part K dealing with stairways, ladders, ramps and guards.

7.15.3 Alterations, extensions and material changes of use affecting historic buildings may present particular problems, and approaches other than those contained in the TGDs may be appropriate in order to ensure compliance while protecting the character of the building. The difficulties that may arise in the application of the Building Regulations to existing buildings is acknowledged in the preamble to each TGD, where it is stated:

In the case of material alterations or changes of use to existing buildings, the adoption without modification of the guidance in this document may not, in all circumstances, be appropriate. In particular, the adherence to guidance, including codes, standards or technical specifications, intended for application to new work may be unduly restrictive or impracticable. Buildings of architectural or historical interest are especially likely to give rise to such circumstances. In these situations, alternative approaches based on the principles contained in the document may be more relevant and should be considered.

7.15.4 In the interest of conserving the character of buildings of outstanding architectural and historical importance, the enhanced thermal performance requirements introduced in the 2002 amendment to the Building Regulations do not apply to works (including extensions) to existing buildings which are protected structures or proposed protected structures under the Planning and Development Act 2000. In that amendment it is also acknowledged that the application of this part may pose particular difficulties for habitable buildings which, although not protected structures or proposed protected structures may be of architectural or historical interest, and the following guidance is included in the TGD:

Works such as the replacement of doors, windows and rooflights, the provision of insulated dry-lining and damp-proofing to walls and basements, insulation to the underside of slating and provision of roof vents and ducting of pipework could all affect the character of the structure. In general, the type of works described above should be carefully assessed for their material and visual impact on the structure. Historic windows and doors should be repaired rather than replaced, and dry-lining and damp-proofing should not disrupt or damage historic plasterwork or flagstones and should not introduce further moisture into the structure. Roof insulation should be achieved without damage to slating (either during the works or from erosion due to condensation) and obtrusive vents should not affect the character of the roof. In specific cases, relaxation of the values proposed may be acceptable if it can be shown to be necessary in order to preserve the architectural integrity of the particular building.

7.15.5 Specific issues in relation to Parts B and M of the Regulations are dealt with respectively in other chapters of these guidelines. Provision is also made in the Building Control Act for the granting of a dispensation or relaxation in relation to specific works or materials by a Building Control Authority where the case for such dispensation or relaxation is accepted by the authority.