

WHY AND HOW TO GET A BUILDING LISTED

The idea of listed buildings came about during WWII as a way of determining which buildings should be rebuilt if they were damaged by bombing. The Town & Country Planning Act 1947 led to the compilation of lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, registers identifying the best of our heritage buildings encompassing a wide variety of types from castles and cathedrals to milestones and water pumps. Not all are what we might conventionally think of as beautiful or attractive - some are included purely for their historical value. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Secretary of State for National Heritage has a statutory duty to compile such lists of buildings, the purpose of which is simply to mark certain buildings to ensure that their special interest is fully taken into account in decisions affecting their future. Most, but not all, buildings have been selected in the course of the national resurvey of listed buildings - every town in England was visited by fieldworkers from the Department of the Environment and the best buildings selected against a set of national criteria.

From 1 April 2005, in a wide-ranging reform of the system for protecting and managing England's historic environment, administration of the listing system was transferred from the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) to English Heritage. So now, anyone, including local residents, amenity groups etc apply directly to English Heritage to place a building on the statutory list, who will make an assessment of the building against set criteria and make a recommendation to list, de-list or amend the grade. The Secretary of State will still make the final decision.

Write to: English Heritage, Heritage Protection Operations, 1 Waterhouse Square, 138-142 Holborn, London EC1N 2ST. Your letter should include:

- reasons for wanting to add the building to the list. Summarise your research on the building and explain why, in your opinion, it is of listable quality. This is important
- a location plan eg OS map extract, showing, where possible, the position of any other listed buildings nearby
- clear up-to-date photos of the main elevations and interiors of the building showing the building at its best
- any background information about the building, for example, the date/s of its construction; any specialised function it may have performed; any historical associations; the name of the architect (if known); its group value in the street scene; and details of any interior features of interest

Local or national groups with an interest in buildings may be able to help you fill in the gaps in your knowledge. A letter of support from them could very much increase your chances of getting the building listed. But don't worry too much if the information is scant.

For listing to be meaningful, buildings must be not just of some interest, but of "special architectural or historic interest". Judgement is based on a set of national standards including:

- the importance to the nation for the interest of their architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship, including particular building types, techniques and plan forms
- important aspects of the nation's historical interest eg social, economic, cultural or military history
- association with well known characters or events
- group value, especially where buildings comprise an important architectural or historical unity or fine example of planning eg squares, terraces, model villages
- if a building has had its interior taken out with loss of architectural features and plan form, this incompleteness will diminish its intrinsic value

Age and rarity are important considerations, particularly when proposed on the strength of their historic interest. The older and the fewer examples surviving the more likely will be the historical importance. Thus before 1700 all buildings surviving in anything like their original condition will be listed; between 1700-1840 most buildings though some selection is necessary; between 1840-1914 only buildings of definite quality and character, including the best examples of particular building types; after 1914 only selected buildings; between 30 and 10 years old only buildings which are of outstanding quality and under threat; and buildings less than 10 years old are not listed at all.

Other factors such as the cost of maintaining the building, unsuitability to modern needs and their current state of repair, are not considered (unless this has harmed the architectural interest). All these things can be considered if an owner wishes to demolish or alter the building.

The extent of listing is important and any object or structure fixed to the building and any object or structure within the curtilage of the building if it has formed part of the land since before 1 July 1948 is treated as being part of the building.

Owners will be notified where applications for listing is made by third parties, though in exceptional circumstances this may be withheld eg if there is an imminent threat of alteration or demolition. The implications about what the listing of properties means to owners is clearer, more informative and includes an appeals procedure.