

HISTORIC BUILDINGS BULLETIN

HERITAGE PROTECTION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER, MARCH 2007

In March 2007 the Government published a White Paper, “Heritage Protection in the 21st century”. The proposals in the White Paper are based around three core principles, namely to develop a unified approach to the historic environment, to maximise opportunities for inclusion and involvement, and to put the historic environment at the heart of the planning system.

A Unified Approach

The heritage protection system has developed separate systems for dealing with different aspects of the historic environment, notably the procedures known as listing (of buildings) and scheduling (of monuments). The Government’s vision is for a unified heritage protection system that is easy to understand and to use, by creating a unified legislative framework for all historic assets, and new procedures for designation and consent.

Inclusion and Involvement

The system will be opened up to greater consultation and scrutiny, and the public will be provided with better information. Local authorities and communities will be encouraged to identify and protect their local heritage.

Putting the Historic Environment at the Heart of the Planning System

The Government is in the process of a major programme of planning reform. It intends to speed up the designation system, to streamline the consent process, and to consider new tools for local planning authorities and developers to address heritage in major developments. It will also devolve more responsibility to local planning authorities.

Key Changes

- A single system of “Registering” to combine and replace listing and scheduling.
- New criteria for national and local designation. National designation decisions to be made on the basis of special architectural, historic or archaeological interest.
- Devolution of responsibility for national designation to English Heritage (from the Department of Culture Media and Sport).
- New consultation and appeal procedures.
- Interim protection for historic assets, while decisions are being made as to their suitability for Registration.

- Merging Listed Building Consent and Scheduled Monument Consent.
- Consulting on merging Conservation Area Consent with Planning Permission.
- Strengthening protection for World Heritage Sites.
- Increasing protection for archaeological remains on cultivated land.
- New procedures by which local planning authorities will be able to protect what are currently known as “locally listed” buildings.

Responses to the White Paper

Responses to the White Paper are invited by 1 June 2007. Three specific questions have been posed for consultation:

1. Should Conservation Area Consent be merged with Planning Permission?
2. Should there be statutory guidance promoting pre-application assessment and discussion for all major planning applications which may affect historic assets?
3. Should the current operation of “Certificates of Immunity from Listing” be expanded so that they can be made at any time, and for any historic asset (at present they apply only to buildings and can only be made when an application for planning permission has been submitted).

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CgMs 19th March 2007

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