



Historic England

Heritage Works for Housing



Summary

Historic England engaged Deloitte LLP to assist with the preparation of this guidance, which uses information provided by Historic England as well as research undertaken by Deloitte to provide guidance on the process for use of historic buildings for residential purposes.

Any views, conclusions, insights, and/or recommendations within this guidance are Historic England's alone. This edition published by Historic England September 2024. Images used in the case studies are by the developer unless otherwise stated.

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Front cover: Park Hill, Sheffield, after refurbishment. [Image: Urban Splash]

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1. Introduction

Our built heritage is an important asset and is integral to our social, economic and environmental wellbeing (for example Colwill 2024). Repurposing and redeveloping our built heritage has the potential to help create dynamic, comforting and sustainable places to live (Historic England 2023a).

This document sets out how heritage can work for housing. It aims to enable and facilitate the repurposing and refurbishment of historic buildings to deliver more homes and better outcomes for all.

It begins by setting out the current development context and priorities. It then provides detailed guidance on the process of transforming a historic building for residential use. This highlights key technical considerations, and references links to other relevant guidance provided by Historic England, who can specifically support each stage of this development process. Case studies are used throughout to illustrate a variety of approaches that have been taken by developers, and exemplify how typical challenges to repurposing and refurbishing historic buildings for residential use have been overcome.

This document focuses on the process for developing residential uses within listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets (historic buildings which are not listed but which have some historic or architectural interest). Throughout the document the term 'historic buildings' is used to mean both listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets.

The document is a daughter document to Heritage Works (Deloitte Real Estate 2017), which is intended to be read alongside this document. It draws upon new research and evidence gathered from across the country and reflects the current socio-political context which requires historic buildings to provide more homes.

2. State of play

This section sets out the current context for the retrofit and repurposing of historic buildings for housing.

2.1 Need for more housing

In recent years, demand for new housing has consistently outstripped supply in England. As a result, development pressures have grown, which has created new challenges which require adaptability in our approach to accommodate new homes in sensitive locations (Historic England 2021a). For example, the redundant textile mills of northern England could provide 42,000 new homes (Historic England 2021b). This emphasises the potential for historic buildings to contribute to the housing supply.

2.2 Contribution to Net Zero Carbon

Historic England highlights that ‘the greenest building is the one that already exists’ (Historic England 2020a). Our built historic environment plays a vital role in the journey towards a low carbon future. Repurposing, refurbishment, and regular maintenance are increasingly important to extend the life of historic buildings, and thereby capitalise on existing embodied carbon. Reuse of historic buildings for housing also presents an opportunity to embed low carbon principles into our historic buildings, reduce carbon footprint whilst preserve the significance of historic buildings for future generations (Historic England 2023b).

2.3 Demand for homes in historic buildings

There is a growing demand for housing in historic buildings, which can provide unique and characterful living spaces. There is a rarity factor with these historic buildings which can be translated into premium selling prices. For example, proximity to a listed building increases property prices by up to about 10% and by 9% if within a conservation area (Historic England 2023c).

'When we have conversion and new build projects side by side, we see that the that the conversion inquiries outnumber the new building inquiries by a factor of four. Perhaps people like historic buildings as a reminder of the past, of a bygone era when things appeared simpler'

Tim Heatley, founder of Capital and Centric.

Investing in historic buildings for housing can act as a catalyst for positive change, place based regeneration and an opportunity to foster civic pride. Bringing these three strands together, there is a clear opportunity for historic buildings to make a meaningful contribution to addressing the housing shortfall and the move towards net zero carbon, all whilst creating places where people want to live.



Computer generated image for Eyewitness Works, Sheffield. [Image: Capital and Centric]

3. Process

This section sets out the key considerations in the process from acquiring a historic building through to completion and occupation.

3.1 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement is a continuous process that is proportionate to the key issues and stages of the project. For example, when buying the historic building it may be prudent to consult with the local planning authority on the principles of proposed development. As the project progresses more detailed engagement will be required dependent on the significance of the historic building and level of intervention proposed.

Stakeholder engagement is important because it can:

- Build knowledge and understanding
- Encourage diversity of thought and inclusivity
- Foster creative thinking and innovation
- Mediate between competing priorities
- Maximise social value and community benefits through aligning projects to place priorities

Through collaborating with key stakeholders and bringing them along on the design development journey it can help mitigate unforeseen comments at the formal planning application or listed building consent stage.

Historic buildings can be much-loved by a community (local or virtual) and there can be significant public opinion on their reuse. Public engagement can bring new ideas and perspectives to a project and can be a valuable resource to provide information on the social interest of a building. They can also present opportunities to enhance social value. However, messaging requires careful management to balance community expectations and commercial considerations.



Case study: **Park Hill** [Image: Urban Splash]

Developer	Urban Splash
Date of Completion	Ongoing
Typology	Residential
Era	1960s
Designation	Grade II* listed building
Number of Units	c. 1000
Location	Sheffield, Yorkshire

Park Hill is a post war housing estate built in the Brutalist style and designed around the ‘streets in the sky’ concept. Urban Splash has embarked on the long-term process to refurbish the historic building to provide about 1000 homes.

The iconic building had experienced years of anti-social behaviour and had failed to live up to its utopian vision. Proposals to refurbish and reimagine the buildings were developed by Urban Splash in partnership with Historic England. Given the scale of the building, a phased approach has been used – starting in 2009.

The phased approach allowed for the perceptions around Park Hill to change, and for it to become established as an interesting and unique community to be a part of; with design and architectural decisions also being a part of this strategy. The phasing also allowed the approach to preserving significance to evolve, with historic significance given more prominence in later phases.

Most importantly, the phased approach also supported the viability position. The initial phases were supported through grant funding, helping to establish Park Hill as a desirable place to live, and therefore increasing the value of the asset. This then unlocked the viability for the later phases.

The proposals have been designed with the ongoing support and engagement of Historic England. Early engagement with key stakeholders, such as Historic England, was crucial to the success of the building and agreeing how to celebrate the building whilst also modernising it for current use.

'Constructive engagement with Historic England is important...they are super helpful in discussing issues and working through problematic buildings. Historic England are here to save buildings and be supportive'

Tom Bloxham, Urban Splash

A key part of the success was undertaking early strip-out works and intrusive investigations to understand the condition of the building. Understanding the condition helped inform cost estimates and design development, thereby reducing risk.

Ultimately, by giving the building a new lease of life, the building has saved 55% carbon compared with a new build. Thermal improvements have also been achieved in later phases with a colourful render that also helps to give each home a distinctive identity.

Key stakeholders will vary from the site specific considerations and the project, but are likely to include:

- Local planning authority officers including the conservation officer
- Historic England
- Local community, including residents and businesses and their local representatives (e.g. Ward Councillors)
- Amenity Societies (for example the Georgian Society, Victorian Society, Twentieth Century Society)
- Other statutory consultees depending on the nature of the planning application (e.g. Local Authority Highways, Environment Agency, Local Authority Environmental Health, Natural England, Local Authority Archaeologist, Access Officers, and Building Control)

The remit of these stakeholders will depend on the type and scale of the project, as set out in Schedule 4 of the relevant legislation (The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015). Historic England may not always have a statutory remit in the process, particularly if in relation to a Grade II listed asset, as set out in the Charter for Advisory Services (Historic England 2017a, 4).

3.2 ‘Buying’ the historic building

For the purpose of this section, ‘buying’ will be given the same meaning as having an options agreement on the asset. This is because there are very similar considerations in the context of this document.

3.2.1 Feasibility

Crucial to the success of repurposing and refurbishing a historic building is undertaking feasibility testing from the outset. Taking time to understand potential risks, costs and design options will help to reduce risk at all stages of the development process.

It will be particularly important at this early stage to establish if a residential use will be acceptable in principle, the building’s ability to accommodate change and the condition of the building. All of these factors will also help ensure an appropriate price is being paid for the building.

3.2.2 Establish if residential use is acceptable

It is first important to establish if national and local planning policy and guidance would support a residential use in the building and/or whether a particular policy tests have to be met or exceptional justification made. In the case of non-designated heritage assets there may be an option to use permitted development (PD) rights. Where a historic building may already have an established residential use, planning permission and listed building consent may still be required to sub-divide the historic building into additional homes, to provide complementary uses or to undertake refurbishment works. At this stage it is useful to engage a qualified town planner and undertake early discussions with the local planning authority to establish opinions on the principle of use.

It is also important to assess if the geometry of the building lends itself to a residential use and whether adjustments to the floorplan can accommodate daylight and sunlight, layout, space requirements and floor-to-ceiling heights to meet guidance and regulatory requirements, as well as market expectations. As part of this, consideration could be given to whether the geometry could be adapted in a manner that is proportionate and meets policy tests.



Case study: Centre Point [Image: Almacantar]

Developer	Almacantar
Date of Completion	2018
Typology	[Industrial and] Commercial
Era	1960s
Designation	Grade II listed building
Number of homes	95 (including 13 in new build)
Location	Camden, London

Centre Point was a high-profile project by Almacantar that involved repurposing the Grade II listed London landmark from a not fit-for-purpose office block with narrow floorplates into 82 new homes. The proposals took a holistic view of the site and surroundings, making significant improvements to the public realm and helping to transform the building and surrounding area into a high-quality residential destination.

Prior to purchasing the site, a feasibility review of the potential uses and layouts was undertaken to establish that residential use could be acceptable in principle whilst also being sensitive to the heritage significance. This helped to inform Almacantar's vision for the building and onwards market and sales strategy.

'To deliver a successful development, there's no point entering into something with a blind hope that you're going to actually secure a value without knowing what the costs are and everything else.'

James Waite, Almacantar

Navigating the planning and listed building consenting regime and the building control process was complex, partly because of the prominence of the building and its iconic status. Where there were tensions between heritage conservation and building control, an iterative process was undertaken to bring the stakeholders along on the journey to reach an acceptable solution and secure the long-term future of the building.

3.2.2.1 Understand the special interest and significance

It is essential to establish early on what the areas of significance are and why the historic building is considered to be of special interest. A heritage consultant can undertake this assessment and will help form an understanding of the building's capacity for change, and thereby inform its commercial value.

3.2.2.2 Understand the condition of the building

To help ensure that an appropriate price is paid for the building, it is important to understand the condition of the building and the cost for repairs and necessary interventions. Section 8 of the vacant buildings guidance (Historic England 2018a) sets out suggested survey items to consider when assessing a building.

3.2.2.3 Understand any previous history on the site.

It can be helpful to understand the development history of the building. This could be through a review of previous planning applications, speaking to previous owners and the local planning authority.

3.2.2.4 Financial viability

Prior to purchasing the historic building, it is helpful to understand what would be required to deliver the project. This may involve a high-level development appraisal and an exploration of potential funding streams and delivery models. Section 3.4 of Heritage Works (Deloitte Real Estate 2017) provides further detail.

3.2.2.5 Initial specialist advisor Input

Initial specialist advice should be sought e.g. architect, planner, heritage consultant and quantity surveyor, to feed into this early feasibility thinking.

3.2.3 Site assembly

Once the historic building and land has been acquired, consideration may be given to combining further land parcels into a larger development site. Heritage Works (ibid.) provides guidance on the site acquisition and site assembly process. This is particularly relevant if additional land is required to accommodate a new build element that helps make the overall project viable (see [Section 5](#) for further detail).

3.3 Project concept and development

This section sets out the process that may be undertaken to progress a project. In reality the following elements will likely happen in parallel. It may be that not all elements are required for every project or can be resolved at the time indicated in the process diagram.

If taking the project through Project Concept and Development, it is assumed that that the optimum viable use (see MHCLG 2019, paragraph 015) has largely been agreed at the 'Buying the Asset' stage. Notwithstanding this, planning policy will require the listed building consent applications to demonstrate that residential use secures public benefits. It may also be necessary to demonstrate that residential is the optimum viable use; this includes evidencing why other uses are not optimum.

3.3.1 Defining the project

3.3.1.1 Setting a clear client brief

Developing a clear client brief for the project team is crucial in articulating the vision and the project objectives. It should include any known constraints or opportunities associated with the historic building. For example, these could include legal or regulatory requirements (such as Building Regulations), access limitations, sustainability targets or aspirations and programme requirements.

3.3.1.2 Assemble the project team

In bringing forward the Project Concept it is beneficial to have a 'core' team of experts embedded in the project from the outset. Key team members are likely to include: a heritage consultant; an architect; a structural engineer; a town planner; project manager;

a development manager; a valuation surveyor; a quantity surveyor; and a Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing ('MEP') engineer. There can be efficiencies in using the same team as for the early feasibility study work.

3.3.2 Project strategy and action plan

3.3.2.1 Set a programme

Utilising the expert team, a realistic and robust programme allowing for an appropriate contingency should be set out.

3.3.2.2 Consider early works

The project strategy should consider where it may be beneficial to undertake work on site early, for example to establish condition of the building and understand how repairs could be undertaken, or to undertake urgent works that will safeguard the building. These intrusive investigations can reduce unforeseen costs and uncertainty through providing in-depth insight into elements of the historic building, such as structural integrity. The information gathered can be used to guide design development. At this stage it can also be beneficial to consider if any archaeological works will be required, typically in the form of a 'written scheme of investigation' and archaeological trenching which could be programmed to occur with other investigations or ground works to maximise efficiencies. It may be that these investigations need be agreed with the local planning authority.

3.3.2.3 Finance and funding

Consideration should be given to the residential product that is likely to be successful in the local market (see [Marketing and sales strategy](#)). This will be essential in refining the development appraisal and funding strategy.

As part of the development appraisal it can be beneficial to consider if any long-term financial requirements need to be considered, for example to cover general or abnormal maintenance items. Heritage Works (Deloitte Real Estate 2017, 19) contains guidance on navigating funding and grants. If available, grant funding can be vital in intervening in poor market conditions and to 'kick start' a scheme.

3.3.2.4 Consider construction contract route

Understanding the construction contract type and procurement routes can be beneficial and can support the level of risk management to be undertaken throughout the project development stages. Early procurement testing can mitigate against future construction programme delays through developing an understanding of the construction appetite for the project and therefore the type of contract likely to be agreed. Using an Employer's Agent who is familiar with historic buildings and residential uses can be beneficial in this process.

For example a cost-plus contract incentivises both the contractor and developer to manage project costs and is generally considered lower risk for the contractor. However, it is higher

risk for the developer as the project's cost is unknown. Conversely, lump-sum contracts have lower risk for the developer, but negative incentives for contractor's outturn where costs will cut into their profit.

3.3.3 Design development and consenting process

3.3.3.1 Develop understanding of the historic building

A key part of the successful repurposing and refurbishing of historic buildings for residential use is taking the time to understand the building. The more the building is understood, the less risky the development process it is likely to be.

It can be pivotal to establish the areas of highest heritage significance and use this information to guide design development. This heritage appraisal will build upon an initial assessment made at the time of purchase. Engagement with Historic England can be useful at this stage to agree and understand these areas of highest heritage significance.

3.3.3.2 Iterative design process

The design development process may include the need to:

- Robustly discount alternative uses, particularly if they require less intervention and therefore perhaps less harm to the significance of the building.
- Test layout options to achieve the required number of homes to make a viable scheme.
- Where a new build element is included, test and evidence the quantum required to achieve an appropriate design response, ensure a viable scheme and minimise harm to the significance of the building as far as possible (see [Section 5](#) for further details).

'The building told us where things should go'

David Roberts, Cartwright Pickard in relation to Ivor House

The design development process should also review potential solutions for key technical aspects. These should be used to demonstrate that the most appropriate option is used in the final design. These technical aspects are likely to include:

- MEP
- Fire
- Access
- Structures

The design development process will also be informed by the local planning authority's application of Building Control. Building Control reviews compliance with building

regulations to ensure a development proposal considers people's safety, health and welfare and complies with standards on accessibility, water use, energy use and security (MHCLG 2020).

It is important for solutions to be developed holistically, balancing all opportunities and challenges, to ensure the right outcome is reached for the development as a whole and the historic building specifically.

[Section 4](#) and [Section 5](#) set out key considerations during the design development process.

3.3.3.3 Consider heritage balance

As the design develops it is beneficial to assess the likely level of harm the proposed interventions may result in and how any harm may be outweighed by the public benefits (MHCLG 2019, paragraph 020) associated with the scheme. This can be set out in a Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by a suitable heritage consultant. This NPPF harm balancing test (ibid., paragraph 018-19) is at the heart of the decision-making process that involve historic buildings.

Where interventions cause harm to the heritage significance it may be necessary to demonstrate why the interventions are necessary to deliver a long-term viable scheme. To support this, a viability appraisal will need to be submitted with the application that demonstrates that without a certain intervention it is not possible to find a viable use for the building. Any viability appraisal should be prepared by a suitably qualified practitioner and in line with Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (2021) Global Standards guidance (commonly known as the 'Red Book').

3.4 Marketing and sales strategy

New homes within historic buildings may respond to a different market than a more traditional new build. It is therefore important to establish if there is a market for the homes or whether you need to invest in creating a market as part of wider development or regeneration proposals.

It is helpful to consider the type of residential product and how this may impact the design and any future disposal strategies. For example, build to rent may be funded by or sold to an investor. Where there are different operating models, that will need to be considered, such as certain levels of residential amenity or size of apartment. A potential build to rent model will need to consider flexibility on these matters in order to align with the capabilities of a historic building.

Additionally it is important to consider if the design will achieve the necessary warranties and insurance for the end product and ultimately for an onwards purchaser or investor.



Case study: **Ancoats Dispensary** [Images: Len Grant]

Developer	Great Places Housing Association (Great Places)
Date of Completion	February 2024
Typology	Institutional
Era	1870s
Designation	Grade II listed building
Number of Homes	39
Location	Manchester, North West

Great Places repurposed and refurbished the iconic Ancoats Dispensary building, securing its long-term sustainable future as 39 residential apartments. Built in the Gothic style, Ancoats Dispensary was part of a larger hospital complex built to provide healthcare to the residents of Ancoats until it closed in 1989. Despite several attempts to repurpose the building, it remained vacant until 2024.

It was a complex project due to the building's very poor condition and the significant challenge in bringing forward a viable use. Early on in the process, Great Places identified the importance of specialist heritage advisors in successfully navigating the project. Using their team of specialist and trusted advisors, Great Places developed a

robust strategy to navigate potential substantial harm to the building balanced against the significant public benefits from securing the long-term future of the building. The substantial harm arose from the existing building being in very poor condition as a result of its long period of vacancy (see image below). The condition was such that it could no longer be fully re-used. Consequently a demolition with a façade retention scheme was proposed to enable the building to be adapted for residential use and secure its long-term future.

Part of the process was undertaking an options analysis that demonstrated that proposals for any use would be unviable without grant funding. This feasibility process demonstrated that affordable housing had the potential to pull together different funding schemes and create a viable development and which had to be balanced against the substantial harm of the interventions.

'We've got an opportunity to save a really special building which did have social purpose and meant such a lot to the community. We knew that if we couldn't do it then it would never happen and it would be lost.'

Helen Spencer, Great Places Housing Association.

The programme included a contingency to allow for additional time to procure a contractor in anticipation of more complex contract negotiations, and also ensuring sufficient time for an appropriately qualified contractor to be procured, thereby reducing construction risk.

The project has successfully revived the social purpose of the Dispensary by saving a building close to the community and providing apartments for social rent.





Case study: Eyewitness Works [Image: Capital and Centric]

Developer	Capital and Centric
Date of Completion	Ongoing
Typology	Industrial and Commercial
Era	1850s
Designation	Grade II listed building
Number of homes	97 (37 in new build)
Location	Sheffield, Yorkshire

Capital and Centric’s Eyewitness Works has seen the restoration and repurposing of a Grade II listed building into 60 apartments, alongside 37 new build apartments through the redevelopment of an adjacent surface car park. The build-to-rent scheme offers housing choice, with a mix of 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom apartments and townhouses.

The Grade II listed building forms part of an important cluster of cutlery works, and is the first phase of broader masterplan, acting as a catalyst for surrounding regeneration within Sheffield City Centre. Refurbishment has enabled the preservation of original features including masonry, beams and columns as well as a 150-year-old friction screw press. The three internal courtyards formerly used for commercial deliveries have been transformed into residents’ gardens.

'Sometimes you have to take a long-term view of value creation – the buildings aren't going anywhere. Conversions tend not to age in the same way as new buildings, when looked after properly they get better with time. We're happy to stick around for the ride, you know, and these buildings deserve that loyalty.'

Tim Heatley, Capital and Centric

The decision to progress with a build-to-rent product was made towards the end of the construction period. The design was flexible enough to appeal to both markets. Through maintaining block ownership of the building it helps to foster a cohesive community by attracting like-minded occupiers.

3.5 Project milestone: securing the necessary permissions and consents

Once the design development is complete, the necessary listed building consent and planning applications should be submitted to the local planning authority for assessment. These applications typically include detailed plans, specifications, and other documentation, demonstrating compliance with planning policy. Key documentation will be the Design and Access Statement and Heritage Statements (Historic England n.d.). Each local planning authority should have a planning application validation check-list to assist in understanding the specific application requirements.

The application(s) should clearly articulate the proposals, the relevant policies and how the proposals accord with these policies and other guidance. For historic buildings, it is important to evidence the process of reaching a preferred option, including through design development and viability considerations. Pre-application engagement with stakeholders such as the local planning authority, to review this body of work, can help to de-risk this element by resolving key issues prior to submitting the application(s).

Once the local planning authority has validated the application, they will likely commence a formal consultation on the planning and listed building application(s). This provides opportunity for statutory stakeholders (such as potentially Historic England, Local Authority Highways Department, Utility Providers etc.) and members of the public to make comments on the application(s). Again, pre-application stakeholder engagement can reduce unforeseen comments.

Once comments have been resolved to the satisfaction of the local planning authority and they are supportive of the proposals, they will look to determine the application(s). This may be at the relevant Planning Committee or may be a delegated decision made by the planning case officer, where that sits within a particular local planning authority's scheme of delegated powers.

3.6 Early works (soft-strip and further investigations)

Early works ahead of commencing the 'main' works can help to reduce risk by providing more programme and cost certainty. There can also be contractual benefits to enabling contracts that are separate from the main contract.

Soft strip of items that are considered to be of no heritage significance can reveal hidden elements of the historic building or provide construction programme gain. If not undertaken during feasibility studies, intrusive investigations can help to de-risk a project and contractual negotiations through providing certainty or more details on a particular aspect e.g. structural condition and asbestos.

These works can be agreed with the local planning authority either through an exchange of correspondence or a standalone listed building consent application. Further information can be found in Consents for works to listed buildings (Historic England 2021c).

3.7 Implementation

3.7.1 Project milestone: entering into contract

The implementation period will be defined by the type of contract. Historic buildings can be complex, and as such contract negotiations can become protracted whilst the relevant parties seek to minimise and mitigate risk. Early consideration of the contract during the design development stage can help to reduce programme impacts and an employer's agent can be valuable in navigating the process.

Key elements of the contract specific to historic buildings may include the scope of work, including any specific requirements related to the preservation of historic features or materials. It may also include insurance and liability requirements for all parties involved in the project, including any specific requirements related to historic preservation.

'My advice for anyone would be to really put as much energy into contractor selection as you put into the technical due diligence. Having the right contractual partner who has the skills and supply chain to be able to do that specialist work is what will ultimately get you the quality outcome that you're looking for.'

Helen Spencer, Great Places Housing Association



CASE STUDY: St James' Hospital [Image: PJ Livesey]

Developer	PJ Livesey
Date of Completion	Ongoing
Typology	Institutional
Era	1870s
Designation	Grade II listed building
Number of homes	209
Location	Portsmouth, South East

St James' Hospital is being brought forward by PJ Livesey as a scheme that reuses the Grade II listed building sensitively to provide 151 homes and a sympathetic new build providing 58 homes within the grounds. The building was used as a hospital until the Solent NHS Trust vacated the property in 2018.

PJ Livesey undertook extensive feasibility and viability testing prior to progressing with the planning and listed building consent applications. To assist with the process PJ Livesey established a trusted team of advisors, using the heritage assessment to

help guide initial design concept. The design continued to evolve during the planning process, with the impact of the proposals on the significance of the listed building being discussed with key stakeholders. This engagement led to further consideration being required regarding the contribution of the landscaping to the setting of the listed building. Consequently, the design and location of the new build elements was amended during the planning and listed building consent determination period.

The trusted team was essential in navigating the process. PJ Livesey de-risked the project through using a technical team with whom they have trusted relationships and who have a strong track record of delivering on listed buildings of this type and therefore of navigating the questions raised by stakeholders during the planning determination period.

After securing planning permission and listed building consent, PJ Livesey is progressing with early works to further understand the condition of the building and this will inform the detailed design process prior to main works commencing on site.

3.7.2 The construction phase

Prior to commencing works, the relevant building control approvals should be sought and this should include any design development as a result of contractual negotiations.

Important considerations in the construction phase that are specific to historic buildings include:

- Discharging the relevant planning and listed building consent conditions.
- Unforeseen discoveries being made.
- As design develops to construction level detail there may be changes required to the approved drawings.

Whilst the challenges for any building project can be difficult to predict, there are a number of considerations that can help to facilitate a smoother process:

- Procure tradespeople with specialised skills in historic preservation.
- Establish a strategy for how unforeseen discoveries will be addressed as and when they arise; this may be included as part of the building contract. The strategy may also include allowing for appropriate contingencies and which specialists should be consulted.

- Ensure that works are carried out in accordance with relevant building codes and regulations.
- Using planning and listed building consent conditions to streamline the construction process by providing a forum to agree details that were unknown at application stage. Otherwise, planning permission and listed building consents may be required for small additional works.
- Consider the supply chain to source the material needed for construction.
- Monitor progress to ensure that the work is being carried out to a high standard, which will involve regular site visits, inspections and quality control checks.
- Effective communication between all members of the project team.

3.7.3 Project milestone: practical completion

Practical completion will likely include an inspection and snagging, handover, final payment, and a defects liability period, before the issue of a completion certificate.

3.8 Occupation and management

The occupation and management stage of a project involves the ongoing use and maintenance of the historic building after the construction and fit-out work has been completed.

3.8.1 Homeowner information and stakeholder engagement

It is important that the historic building is used and managed in a way that preserves its historic character and integrity, while also meeting the needs of its occupants. It will be important for potential occupiers to understand the scope of interventions they can make to their homes without requiring approvals and this information could form part of a 'homeowner pack'.

Effective stakeholder engagement is essential to ensure that the building is used and managed in a way that meets the needs of its occupants and the wider community. This may involve consultation with residents, tenants, businesses, and other stakeholders to identify issues and opportunities for improvement and may be in the form of a management committee.

3.8.2 Ongoing management and maintenance

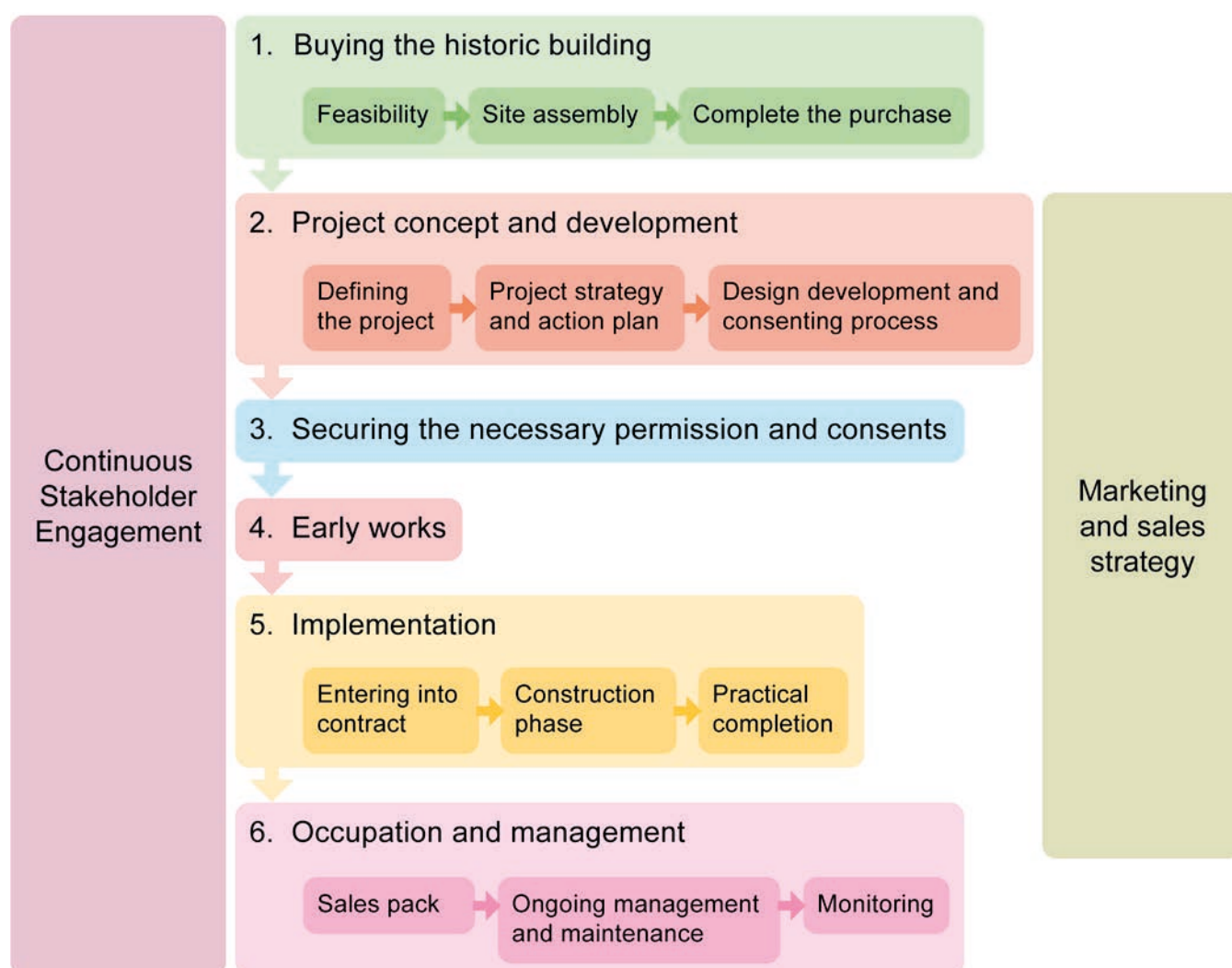
There will be items of regular maintenance which should be agreed with the local planning authority such as external cleaning. This should be set out in a Management and Maintenance Plan. Like-for-like replacements should not require the local planning authority's approval.

Upgrades, modifications, or more intrusive maintenance may be required to meet changing needs. It is important to ensure that any modifications are carried out in a way that is consistent with the building's historic character and any relevant regulations or guidelines.

On more complex schemes, a Heritage Partnership Agreement could be utilised (Historic England 2015). Once in place, this can negate the need to engage with the local planning authority again on routine matters of maintenance or minor refurbishment where a listed building consent may otherwise be required.

3.8.3 Monitoring

It is beneficial to monitor the building's condition and performance over time, and to evaluate the effectiveness of any maintenance or management strategies that are implemented. This may involve regular inspections, surveys, or other assessments.



The development process.

4. Managing change

This section aims to help potential developers navigate through specific technical challenges that are common when repurposing and refurbishing historic buildings for housing.

4.1 Key design development considerations

Whilst each building is unique, there are some typical interventions that are usually required to make it suitable for residential use. Listing Building Consent Advice Note 16 (Historic England 2021c) sets out the instances where Listed Building Consent is likely to be required for these works. All items relating to building regulations should be discussed and agreed with both the local planning authority's building control officer and the conservation officer.

In recognition of their national significance, listed buildings are exempt from meeting certain building regulations. However, any new build element would be subject to current building regulations. Therefore design development should robustly ensure that all necessary regulations can be met.

This is not an exhaustive list, and should always be informed by an appointed technical team:

- **Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (MEP)** – It is likely that MEP upgrades will be required. This can improve the building's operational carbon and running costs. It is best practice to minimise intervention in the building by making use of existing openings and risers where possible, or routing the MEP through any new build elements. These also need to include practical considerations for the end user, such as location of radiators or ventilation extract locations.
- **Sustainability** – If there is a desire or need to meet certain sustainability targets, then this will need to be balanced against the potential heritage harm of interventions. This is a particular consideration for investors who may have specific mandatory energy targets. When reviewing these targets, it is important to take a whole building approach to deliver maximum benefits. Embodied and operational carbon should be understood together to ensure decisions are being made that will have the maximum effect with the least impact on the special interest of the building. For example the return on carbon savings may not be justified by fabric interventions (e.g. roof, floor,

walls, windows) due to their embodied carbon, including construction impacts; higher carbon savings may be achieved through a focus on operational carbon, noting that the electricity grid will be zero carbon by 2050. Further advice on specific interventions is set out in Historic England's (2018b) guidance.

- **Windows** – The performance of windows affects both the energy efficiency of a building and the ventilation strategy. As part of a holistic review of the building's energy performance, options that may be considered include the use of secondary glazing or replacement of the glass within the original window frames. Given the prominence of windows on the appearance of a building, these are often areas of high significance. Where historic windows, whether original or later insertions, make a positive contribution to the significance of a listed building they should be retained and repaired where possible. Historic England's (2023d) guidance *Modifying Historic Windows as Part of Retrofitting Energy-Saving Measures* sets out further advice on specific interventions.
- **Overheating including consideration to the M&E/Window strategy** – It is important that the homes are places where people will want to live. It is necessary to consider how the building will be ventilated in the summer and what other overheating mitigation may be required.
- **Acoustics** – There may be a need to mitigate sound transfer either between units or uses – or from the outside. This acoustic assessment will need to balance necessary acoustic attenuation against the concealment of areas of significance within the building.
- **Floor-to-ceiling heights and layout constraints** – Some historic buildings may have non-typical floor-to-ceiling heights. If floor-to-ceiling heights are too low, significant intervention may be required such as the removal of every other floor, as was done at the Grade II-listed Stanley Dock Tobacco Warehouse in Liverpool. If floor-to-ceiling heights are too high, then the building may be less energy efficient. However, large floor-to-ceiling heights provides opportunity for the introduction of mezzanines and duplex apartments.
- **Sub-division** – How the building is sub-divided into multiple homes needs to be carefully considered. This should balance a consideration of the original planform and where the special interest of the building lies against market expectation, regulations, policy and guidance. Unless there is a robust justification, all residential developments are expected to comply with nationally set space standards (MHCLG 2015), including those created through permitted development rights.

- **Access** – Particularly where a building is sub-divided there may be a need for different or new forms of circulation space within the building and potentially new entrances and fire exits and staircases. It may also be that new openings are required to introduce lifts, or existing lifts are required to be modernised, potentially with new car lift systems within existing lift shafts.
- **Accessibility** – Guidance on balancing the importance of creating accessible places for all and increasing access to the building with potential impacts on the significance of the building is provided in *Improving Access to Historic Buildings and Landscapes* (Historic England 2021d).
- **Parking/Sustainable Travel** – There can be an expectation or requirement from planning policy for onsite car provision (including blue badge parking). Agreeing the proportion of car parking and its location is important. This is particularly the case where there may be limited surrounding developable land, extensive structural intervention, or new structures. In addition, it may be that the building is rurally located, in which case consideration will need to be given to how the proposals will encourage sustainable travel.
- **Waste and servicing** – Proposals will need to provide adequate bin stores and servicing arrangements, which can be trickier to accommodate within a historic building.
- **Provision of affordable housing** – Where planning applications for a residential use do not comply with affordable housing policy, applicants will be required to submit a viability statement as required under local planning policy and the NPPF (MHCLG 2024). Viability can be constrained on heritage projects and therefore it is often demonstrated that it is not viable to include on-site affordable housing. Additionally, there may be complexities around a Registered Provider occupying the building due to the potentially unusual layouts and long-term maintenance costs. Conversely, through working collaboratively with Registered Providers there are circumstances where grant funding may enable challenging historic buildings to be restored and secure their long-term viable use as affordable housing (see case study above on Ancoats Dispensary).
- **Fire Safety** – There can be a tension between fire safety and heritage matters. These may be fire break locations, treatment to existing fabric, and door upgrades. It is important to consider how this may be managed at an early stage and understand any bespoke solutions that may be required.

- **Post-1919 historic buildings** – These can be less ornate but are often examples of innovation through construction and materiality (e.g. asbestos) which can result in poor energy performance. They may therefore require more investigation and bespoke technical solutions.
- **Repairs** – The historic building will likely require some areas of repair, of lesser or greater degree depending on the condition of the building. Like-for-like repairs should be considered in the first instance and do not typically require consent.
- **Restoration** – this is where there is the deliberate intention to reveal or recover a known feature of significance that may have been removed, altered or obscured. This specialist requirement should be considered within any development appraisals. It should be seen holistically within the proposals and the benefits derived should be proportionate to the feature of significance to be restored.
- **Cleaning** – Historic buildings often require sensitive cleaning of the façade and interiors. This may need to be agreed with the local planning authority.
- **Archaeology** – Generally, archaeology is required only for below-ground works. For re-purposing a historic building this may also include where lift pits are required. Where there is a new-build element it is recommended that an early archaeological desktop study is undertaken to assess the likelihood of below-ground remains of importance. Based on this, the local planning authority may ask for trial trenching and potentially further recording. Allowing for these investigations and programming them with other activities on the site such as early works can create efficiencies.
- **Flood Risk** – proposals will need to be cognisant of the flood zone in which the building and land is located. There can be restrictions to what uses are suitable, including whether or not residential use is appropriate at ground floor level. Consideration may also need to be given to whether a new build element could increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

4.2 Typology-specific interventions

Over time, historic buildings may transition through multiple uses. However, certain build typologies have specific considerations for the interventions that are typically required. The typologies referenced below are examples of the opportunities and constraints for different building typologies, although this list is not exhaustive.



Case study:

Ivor House [Image: John Kees Photography]

Developer	Muse
Date of Completion	2018
Typology	[Industrial] and Commercial / Institutional
Era	1930s
Designation	Non-designated heritage asset
Number of homes	26
Location	Lambeth, London

Ivor House is a former department store in Brixton that was converted into a mixed-use development comprising 26 residential apartments and ground floor commercial units. The non-designated heritage asset was last used for a local authority office and was identified for repurposing as part of the local authority's asset consolidation project. The project restored the redundant and outdated historic building to form part of a comprehensive place-making strategy as part of the 'Your Town Hall' project.

Muse worked collaboratively with the conservation officer from the outset to agree the areas of significance and how these could be protected whilst also undertaking appropriate interventions to facilitate the repurposing of the building into new homes. This included using secondary glazing and wall linings to improve the energy efficiency, whilst also maintaining the visual appearance of the original art deco windows. The design also reused existing openings where possible, reducing the need for intervention into historic fabric. A key intervention was the upwards extension which was designed sensitively and discussed early in the design development with the conservation officer, resulting in supportive stakeholder engagement throughout. Overall, the retention of the character of Ivor House has resulted in a sought-after residential address that forms part of the ongoing placemaking within the heart of Brixton.

4.2.1 Industrial and commercial (e.g. mills, warehouses, offices and department stores)

Common considerations to enable repurposing of an industrial or commercial typology to residential use may include:

- These buildings typically have a regular floorplan which can lead to more straightforward division of residential uses.
- The introduction of a lightwell or atrium to meet the daylight requirements within large floorplates. In some instances, the layout may result in larger apartments than may be typically sought.
- Generous floor-to-ceiling heights can lend themselves to mezzanine levels or duplex apartments.
- Given their size, a phased delivery approach may be required to meet the market demand while managing viability.
- Shallow floorplates may be more suited to horizontal subdivision and therefore have additional access requirements.
- Typically, mill and warehouse interiors are less ornate and have a greater capacity for change (Historic England 2017b).
- Offices and department stores may have ornate areas and interior character, more akin to the institutional characteristics (see below) which will often be considered areas of higher heritage significance and therefore less capable of change.

4.2.2 Institutional (e.g. hospitals, town halls, schools, chapels and churches)

Common consideration to enable repurposing of an institutional typologies to residential use may include:

- Potential sensitivities on chapels and churches due to potential presence of burials or memorials, as well as ecclesiastical designations.
- Grand and highly decorative with ornate primary facades and characterful interiors. A proportionate approach needs to be taken, guided by the expert technical team to identify suitable areas for change.
- Floorplans may be more complex and therefore layouts may require more creativity to create new homes.
- Often these buildings have a large civic or collective space that is of higher heritage significance that will need to be considered in the design. It may be that this space is suitable for communal or ancillary use.
- These buildings may have grand staircases that are usually of higher heritage significance and therefore may need to be incorporated into the design.
- These typologies may retain surrounding land which could be used for residential amenity or, where necessary, for car parking.
- The windows may be unusual in their scale and positioning which will need to be considered in the design development.

4.2.3 Residential (e.g. above the shop, former council housing and large country houses)

Common consideration to enable repurposing of existing residential typologies may include:

- If subdividing a large existing residential property, consideration will need to be given to how suitable access and circulation will be achieved within the building, particularly where space may be more limited. This includes fire escapes.
- Large residential properties are typically situated with surrounding land which could be used for amenity or, where necessary, for car parking.

5. The interface of new and old

5.1 The role of new build elements

The repurposing of historic buildings can present viability challenges and therefore may require an element of new build to ‘cross-fund’ the works to bring the historic building into a long-term viable use. It may also be that the site interfaces with brownfield land and a new build residential element is the most suitable use of the land.

Planning applications for residential development may require a viability statement. Even if a proposal does comply with the local planning authority’s affordable housing policy, it may be necessary to submit a viability statement to demonstrate the need for a new build element that may cause an element of harm to the historic building, either directly or through affecting its setting.

There are also instances of enabling development. This term has a specific meaning in the historic environment: ‘enabling development is development that would not be in compliance with local and/or national planning policies, and not normally be given planning permission, except for the fact that it would secure the future conservation of a historic building’. (Historic England 2020b, 2). It is used to assist directly with addressing the conservation deficit, which is defined as, ‘The amount by which the cost of repair (and conversion to optimum viable use if appropriate) of a historic building exceeds its market value on completion of repair and conversion, allowing for all appropriate development costs’ (ibid. 3).

It is important to understand the viability role of the new build element when framing the planning and listed building case. For enabling developments there is typically much greater scrutiny.

Case study:

Murray's Mill

Developer	Manchester Life Development Corporation
Date of Completion	2017
Typology	Industrial and Commercial
Era	1790s
Designation	Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings
Number of homes	124 (108 in listed building)
Location	Manchester, North West

Murray's Mill is a conversion of a complex of steam powered cotton spinning mill buildings to provide 108 apartments and a sympathetic new build extension comprising 16 apartments. The mill complex also has a central courtyard with a canal basin which was historically connected to the Rochdale Canal.

The historic building was in poor condition following years of neglect. As such, the previous owners had been successful in securing some heritage lottery funding to make urgent structural repairs, and for the demolition of unsafe structures.

Manchester Life Development Company adopted the principle of minimum intervention to historic fabric and archaeological remains. Where elements could not be retained, for example because of the original floorboards being saturated with oil from the historic machinery, this was clearly evidenced and justified. The layout and floor-to-ceiling heights lent themselves to duplexes at the upper levels, typical of the mill typology.

The proposals included an extension, which replaced a building that had been destroyed in a fire; and took its cues from the character of the remaining historic buildings. Following detailed engagement, Historic England were supportive of the designs.

The private amenity was also used to celebrate the history of the site through retaining coping stones of the former canal basin so the former edge of the now filled-in basin, is still legible.

The development was a key site in the regeneration of the historic industrial neighbourhood of Ancoats in Manchester and had a catalytic effect on the regeneration of the area, which Time Out magazine described as ‘a supremely pleasant mix of public art, innovative restaurants and a whole load of great community initiatives’ (*Time Out* 13 October 2021).

Funding and phasing strategies need to be cognisant of the different elements of the building. On occasion, a condition of planning may be that the new build element cannot be occupied until works have commenced on the listed building.

5.2 Form of the new build

Design development exercises are likely to be required to demonstrate the build element has been sensitively designed.

It is anticipated that any new build element would be subject to current building regulations. Therefore design development should robustly ensure that all necessary regulations can be met.

5.2.1 Extension

All extensions need to give specific attention to the structural integrity of the historic building and the interventions that may be required to facilitate that extension. These interventions need to be sensitively designed with consideration to areas of higher heritage significance.

Additionally, consideration needs to be given more broadly to the impact on townscape and other amenity considerations for the surrounding uses. This includes, for example, the potential impact on neighbouring privacy, noise, and daylight.

5.2.2 New build

Where new build elements are standalone, then additional consideration needs to be given to how the development affects the setting, and potentially harms the significance, of an existing historic building; and whether any resultant harm can be justified.

Case study: Wood Street Town Houses

Developer	Watch This Space
Date of Completion	2021
Typology	Institutional
Era	1870s
Designation	Non-designated heritage asset
Number of homes	5 (2 in new build)
Location	Manchester, North West

The Wood Street Townhouses development consists of the conversion of a non-designated heritage asset (a former Mission building) and new build element that are located within a conservation area and adjacent to a Grade I listed building.

The existing layout of the non-designated heritage asset was challenging and achieving an optimal layout was constrained by the existing building envelope and door and window positions. In addition, as a smaller scale build, there were challenges to ascertain abnormal costs or benefit from economies of scale. As such it was necessary to have the new build element to support the overall viability of the scheme.

'There is a real fine balance between bringing a heritage asset back and having the cost to refurbish it.'

Michelle Rothwell, founder of Watch this Space

The new build element was situated on land previously used for car parking which was no longer required given the site's highly sustainable city centre location.

The two new-build townhouses helped to create a viable development that allowed for positive outcomes to be achieved overall. The Wood Street Townhouses represent an effective use of an existing non-designated heritage asset, delivering high quality residential uses in a constrained city centre location, on a small bespoke scale.



6. Summary

Historic England aims to support developers in their journey to re-using historic buildings. This guidance highlights how historic buildings can be repurposed and refurbished to provide residential development. It outlines the process from buying an historic building to long-term occupation and management and highlights the key challenges and approaches that may apply. The document provides inspirational case studies of successful reuse of historic buildings into new homes, creating sustainable and dynamic places to live. Unused or underused historic buildings should be seen as opportunities to address current industry challenges, including the housing crisis, whilst minimising carbon impacts.

7. Further reading

Additional information to support property developers is available at <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/support/>.

Further guidance on owning and developing industrial sites can be found at <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/industrial-heritage/owning-and-developing/>.

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8. Where to get advice

8.1 Contact Historic England

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