



Valuing Historic Places

Introduction

Historic buildings and places have played an increasingly central role in the delivery of a range of public benefits, including education, economic development, sustainable growth, urban and rural regeneration, repopulation of inner-city areas, improved competitiveness, cultural development, and providing facilities for local communities. The historic environment underpins many successful projects aimed at improving quality of life, transforming failing areas, empowering local people and creating a better and more sustainable environment. Historic Buildings have their own intrinsic value and any nation that claims to cherish cultural achievement in any field has a duty to care for them. The value of historic buildings and places is recognised in UK legislation and in our being a signatory to various international charters and conventions (UNESCO, Council of Europe, etc). Value is also conferred by every authority and amenity body in the UK and by the growing popularity of historic buildings and places in the public mind.

Value and Benefits of Heritage

The historic environment delivers a range of public benefits:

Social, Economic and Environmental Value

Helping Places to Adapt to Modern Needs

Historic buildings and areas are key elements in the regeneration of cities, towns and rural areas all around the UK. Historic buildings have often undergone repeated adaptations and have proved to be durable and flexible to changing needs.

Most historic buildings are in use. They are part of the infrastructure of modern society.

Tackling Areas of Market Failure and Deprivation

In areas of market failure and deprivation, schemes to improve and enhance heritage assets can often help to create confidence, improve image, attract investment, create new facilities for social enterprise and act as a catalyst to reverse economic decline and in some instances deliver structural economic and physical transformations.

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Enterprise, Innovation and Creative Industries

Historic buildings help to provide diversity in the nature and affordability of commercial and industrial floorspace. Older buildings can provide low-cost floorspace, essential to supporting new and small businesses, creative industries, innovation and knowledge-based employment.

Economic Development and Competitiveness

There is a direct relationship between the quality of the built environment and an area's economic development potential. A well maintained historic environment helps to project a positive image, create investor confidence, attract high value jobs and improve competitiveness.

The historic environment creates places where people positively choose to live, work, invest and spend recreation time.

Tourism

Historic places and buildings attract visitors and are an essential element of the Tourism industry, attracting visitors from overseas and encouraging domestic tourism. Tourism is an important sector of the UK economy.

Prosperous Town and City Centres

Historic centres attract shoppers and visitors, helping to improve competitiveness and viability. Historic buildings and areas often accommodate independent retailers and other businesses, helping to avoid the creation of 'clone towns'.

Historic buildings, areas and waterways are a catalyst for the repopulation of inner city areas and development of new and more-specialised housing, retail and leisure markets.

Rural Renaissance

Historic buildings and places have helped to accommodate new uses, facilitate economic diversification and form a basis for new, small industries, tourism and the visitor economy in rural areas and small settlements.

Leisure and 24 Hour Economy

Historic areas often provide the focus for leisure facilities, from theatres and art installations to restaurants and bars.

Enhanced Values

Listed buildings in office or domestic use deliver consistently higher yields and values than other buildings.

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Supporting Local Communities

Selective redevelopment based around the historic environment is almost universally more successful than large-scale comprehensive redevelopment, better fulfilling the needs of local communities and maintaining local cultural, social and economic diversity.

Historic buildings and areas can provide accommodation for a range of social and community facilities, better accessibility and choice for non-car owners, low rental business accommodation, affordable housing, and a basis for transforming under-performing areas and creating new opportunities.

Specialist shops and businesses providing low-cost or minority-interest goods and services (for example vinyl records, musical instruments, ethnic foods and fashions) are often to be found in older, more-peripheral areas of town and city centres, where rentals are lower than in redeveloped areas. Preserving older buildings and places therefore helps to support choice and diversity.

Human Resources

Refurbishing old buildings places a greater emphasis on skilled labour and less emphasis on the use of physical resources than is the case with new-build development. Building refurbishment therefore generates higher levels of pay and investment in local economies.

Sustainable use of Resources

The conservation and refurbishment of historic buildings is an intrinsically sustainable form of development, avoiding the use and waste of scarce resources associated with demolition and redevelopment, and helping to achieve sustainable growth.

The investment of energy in the construction of historic buildings has already been made and has resulted in many instances in more durable structures, some of which have lasted for centuries. Such structures often require less maintenance and have lower lifetime costs.

Sustainable Patterns of Development

Historic areas were designed for a low-carbon economy in terms of movement and activity patterns, usually having urban design characteristics based on the needs of pedestrians, with rear of pavement active frontages and permeable layouts. Older areas usually provide a fine grain of mixed use. Historic settlements often contain a concentration of community facilities. Historic building patterns are often high density and utilise party-wall construction. Therefore, historic areas tend to support more sustainable lifestyles.

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Public Value

Intrinsic Value

Historic Buildings and places have intrinsic value in their own right as the fabric of human achievement in arts, design and construction, essential to the spiritual and cultural well-being of the nation.

Public Support

Surveys have shown that protecting heritage, including twentieth century buildings, enjoys the support of the vast majority of the population.

There is a wide public acceptance that we have a duty to conserve the built heritage for current and future generations.

Local Distinctiveness

Investment in historic places helps to support local businesses, industries and communities. It preserves distinctive local identity and sense of place and fosters local pride.

Local Empowerment

Historic buildings are used by local voluntary groups and third sector organisations, such as building preservation trusts and development trusts, to provide facilities for local people to improve their skills and opportunities.

Urban Design Quality and Variety

Historic areas provide demonstrably superior urban design, including pedestrian friendly places, legible townscapes, greater variety of urban forms and superior public realms.

Cultural, Learning and Skills Value

Education

The Historic Environment provides a tangible resource for the teaching of social, economic, political and human history, helping to create a better understanding of contemporary society and contributing to effective school, continuing and adult learning.

Culture

The historic environment is the embodiment of local and national culture, whilst also accommodating a range of cultural artefacts and activities.

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Skills

Conservation practice creates more skilled jobs (professional, technical, skilled manual, and vocational) and employment in craft-based industries.

Creative New Design

The historic environment provides a basis for understanding architectural design and urban morphology and creates a context and stimulus for creative and innovative new design and the development of new architectural forms.

The Future for Historic Environments

It is only through proper protection, conservation and management of the historic environment, supported by investment in its maintenance, repair and adaptation that these substantial benefits can continue to be realised.

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation is the professional body for the United Kingdom representing building and historic environment conservation specialists and practitioners in the public, private and third sectors. The Institute exists to establish the highest standards of conservation practice, to support the effective protection and enhancement of the historic environment, and to promote heritage-led regeneration and access to the historic environment for all.

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