

Why are Buildings Listed?

Buildings of special architectural or historic interest are given legal protection by being designated by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport as "listed buildings". Although people often think of this as a preservation order, it does not prevent change. Instead, listing is a mark of recognition of importance and it enables local authorities under the planning system to vet and consider proposals for alteration, demolition, extension or any new buildings within their grounds.

The government produces a register of buildings of special architectural or historic interest that covers the whole of England. In Wales this register is produced by CADW. These "listed buildings" include a wide variety of structures, ranging from castles and cathedrals to mileposts and phone boxes. The quality of buildings and their individual historic or architectural interest varies enormously, so buildings are classified in grades to show their relative importance;

Grade I: these are buildings of exceptional interest (only about 2.5% of listed buildings are in this grade)

Grade II*: these are particularly important buildings of more than special interest (only about 5.5% of listed buildings)

Grade II: these are buildings of special interest, which warrant every effort being made to preserve them (92% of listed buildings)

Each area of the country has its own list and these are available to view at your local public reference library or local authority offices. English Heritage has an online search facility for listed buildings available through the Heritage Gateway (<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>)

Whole lists for towns or rural areas are reviewed occasionally, if there is a real need. Buildings first started to be "listed" from 1947 and as the criteria have evolved the lists have been reviewed over the following decades. Generally, since the last major country-wide review was undertaken in the 1980s, there has been no need to carry out a large-scale review of listed buildings and the use of structured, "thematic" reviews of particular building types has been the focus of attention. If an historic building is not listed, it will usually be because it has not met the national criteria. There are odd exceptions that have either been over-looked or where new information comes to light and sometimes there will be a case for these to be individually "spot-listed".

Each building is looked at on the basis of a set of national criteria. This is set out broadly below.

Which Buildings are Listed? – Selection Criteria

Buildings are listed on the basis of **national significance**. English Heritage examines the case and makes recommendations and the decision on whether to list is taken by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The criteria for listing buildings are decided by English Heritage.

English Heritage has produced detailed selection guides on their website, which explain the decision making process and includes the whole range of building types, from educational buildings to houses and commercial buildings.

Local significance (either for contribution to the local scene or for historical associations) is not relevant to the selection process.



Very broadly, the criteria for listing buildings are;

- ... all buildings built **before 1700** which survive in anything like their original condition
- ... most buildings of **1700 to 1840**, though selection is necessary
- ... between **1840 and 1914** only buildings of definite quality and character, and the selection is designed to include the principal works of the principal architects
- ... **after 1914** only selected outstanding buildings are listed
- ... buildings that are **less than 30 years old**, only if they are of outstanding quality and under threat
- ... buildings that are less than 10 years old are not listed

In choosing buildings, the main criteria used are:

Architectural interest

All buildings which are of importance to the nation for the interest of their architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship; also important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms;

Historic interest

This includes buildings that illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history;

Close historical association

Association with nationally important people or events. Buildings should normally be of some architectural merit in addition, to qualify for listing;

Group value

Especially where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning (e.g. squares, terraces or model villages).

Age and rarity are also key considerations, particularly where buildings are proposed for listing on the strength of their historic interest. The older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have historic importance.

Derelict Buildings

The listing criteria do not directly include such factors as the condition of the building but if neglect or bad condition has so reduced the architectural interest of the building that it is no more than a relic of what it was, this is taken into account.

