

Extract from the Conservation Strategy (2003)

Preservation and maintenance of historic buildings

5.9 Owners of listed buildings have no specific duty to keep their buildings in a good state of repair, and may be reluctant to do so when the building is perceived to be of insufficient value to justify its long term up keep. The council is however empowered to take action where a building has deteriorated to such an extent as to put its preservation at risk and / or to cause wider visual harm.

5.10 For more than 20 years the council and its predecessor councils have sought to encourage the preservation of the city's historic building stock by offering financial assistance. In the last 5 years alone council historic building grant schemes have assisted the repair of some 160 historic buildings, including 21 that were identified as buildings at risk. They have also provided an effective means to secure, through negotiation, the reinstatement of architectural features important to a street's character and appearance. Partnership grant schemes now focus on area based regeneration, rather than property based restoration and, should this trend continue, investment in the care and maintenance of the historic building stock outside the grant aided areas may decline. Where this becomes evident, the council will use its powers under the Planning, Housing and Building Acts to secure repairs, good long term use for this building stock and its proper preservation.

Action:

The council will act corporately to secure the repair and reuse of historic buildings.

Within the next three years the Council will endeavour through negotiation and / or legal action to facilitate the repair and where appropriate, the reuse of the following buildings at risk:

***West Pier
Bandstand, Kings Road,
Stanmer House, Stables and Barn,
Marlborough House, 54 Old Steine,
Embassy Court, Kings Road,
3 Old Steine,
Dovecote, Church Hill, Patcham,
38 Brunswick Street East,
128 Kings Road.***

5.11 Comprehensive condition surveys of the listed buildings in Brighton & Hove were last completed in the early 1990's. More recently English Heritage has published each year a register of grade 1 and 2* listed buildings at risk, including several of those listed above.

Action:

The Council will assess the resource implications of introducing over time a public 'historic buildings at risk' register, including council owned historic properties, based on national English Heritage criteria. Listed Buildings entered on the register will be treated as live cases requiring regular review and action.

5.12 A comprehensive and systematic re-survey is unrealistic, nor does it necessarily identify major building defects if the survey is simply carried out from the street. Instead the register will be publicised and updated in response to individual reports from council staff and residents. The register will include listed buildings, buildings on local lists and others that make a special contribution to the appearance of a conservation area. It is anticipated that a Register would in this way have identified all buildings at risk within 3 years. Buildings on this register may be in poor to very bad condition, or in fair condition but functionally redundant, making their future uncertain.

5.13 The register will include a record of the condition and appearance of neglected buildings, ownership details and progress towards repair. This knowledge will enable an assessment to be made of the nature of the threat and the likely cost of securing the long-term preservation of the historic buildings. It will inform any future bids for grant funding from government agencies etc. It is a working tool, helping to define the scale of the problem and to prioritise action. All buildings on the public register will nevertheless be considered as live cases requiring regular review and action.

5.14 The council is committed to reduce the number of historic buildings at risk in Brighton & Hove and ensure adequate levels of maintenance for all historic buildings, including those in its ownership, as promoted in the Society for the Protection of Ancient Building's recent publication "Stitch in Time".

Action:

The council will continue to make use of its statutory powers, for example, under sections 47, 48 and 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, under section 215 of the Planning Act 1990 and under sections 189, 190, and 372 of the Housing Act, at an early stage in the process of neglect and decay to secure the future of other historic buildings not on the register, yet vulnerable to more serious and rapid decay.

5.15 Historic buildings are a finite, irreplaceable resource. They are usually very flexible and adaptable over time to a variety of uses. They are more sustainable in the long run, particularly having regard to the environmental capital already invested and the waste that would be generated by their demolition, than most modern replacement buildings. All around us are good examples of old buildings brought back into modern use for the enjoyment of future generations.

Action:

Consideration will be given to the designation of a Historic Buildings at Risk Officer, to increase the number of repair notices served and monitor repair work to buildings on the 'at risk' register. The council will commit to proactive involvement in securing repairs and a viable future for buildings on the list.

Action:

- ***Consideration will be given to creating a corporate working group within the council, with the purpose of***
- ***maintaining a record of council owned heritage assets,***
- ***developing a maintenance strategy for council owned historic buildings & monuments,***
- ***developing conservation management statements,***
- ***advising on alternative use or disposal of heritage assets.***