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# **Principles for Sustaining Guernsey's Historic Environment**



**Development &  
Planning Authority**

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Loop-Hole Tower, L'Ancresse.  
(protected monument)



Torteval Parish Church, Torteval.  
(protected building)



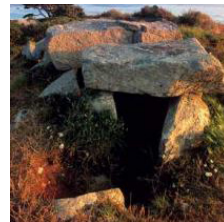
The Markets, St Peter Port.  
(protected building)

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Guernsey has an exceptionally fine and interesting historic environment which is the physical legacy of thousands of years of human activity in the Island. There is little in the physical environment that does not, in some way, bear the stamp of the past – the landscape itself and the sites, monuments and buildings within it.
- 1.2. The historic environment is made up of all parts of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible or buried. We value it because it links us to our shared history as a community and provides inspiration for the future. We admire it because of its architectural and aesthetic character and interest, and for what it can tell us about the lives of previous generations. It is part of our sense of identity and the way the world sees us. It has social and economic value through education, tourism and our quality of life.
- 1.3. We recognise that the remains of the past are finite and once lost, cannot be replaced. At the same time, the historic environment is constantly evolving as each generation adapts and adds to it.
- 1.4. We wish to sustain the historic environment for present and future generations, managing change in ways that protect and enhance its special character and interest whilst meeting the needs of those who live in it and care for it.
- 1.5. The objective of this document is to set out the principles upon which the future care and management of the historic environment should be based. It sets out the context of the historic environment, the Principles, and sets out what is meant by special character and interest. It also makes reference to other documents which are of value in relation to the historic environment.
- 1.6. These Principles for Sustaining Guernsey's Historic Environment form part of overarching guidance on the historic environment and have been informed by the protected building public consultation undertaken in summer 2012.
- 1.7. This document was first approved by the former Environment Board on 19th March 2013.



Photograph - Environment Department



Photographs - Environment Department

## 2. An overview of the development of Guernsey's historic environment

- 2.1. The variety of human activity over centuries has produced the distinctive rich and diverse landscape of today reflecting Guernsey's unique history.
- 2.2. Guernsey became an island around 8000BC when it was separated from mainland Europe by rising sea level. Human activity has shaped the island through sea defences, land drainage and reclamation. The most dramatic change was the reclamation of the Braye du Valle in 1807 which created the island we know today.
- 2.3. Use of the land for agriculture has resulted in a distinctive pattern of small fields with associated lanes, enclosed by earth banks and walls as well as the farmsteads, and farm buildings together with cider presses (prinseux), garennes (rabbit warrens) and abreuveurs (animal watering places). This formed the scattered settlement pattern of small farmsteads and hamlets outside the main settlement of St Peter Port.
- 2.4. Changing agricultural practices saw the development of the horticultural industry, which started in the early 19th century and reached its peak in the 1970's.
- 2.5. The range of houses from medieval times to the present day are represented in great variety, illustrative of centuries of social, economic and cultural change, from the remains of ancient long houses, to the manor houses, farmhouses, town houses, workers cottages, merchant houses and villas. The range of architectural styles is equally broad, reflecting the wider world but much with a distinctive Guernsey character.
- 2.6. The Island's strong association with the sea is most striking in the major harbours of St Peter Port and St Sampsons, originating in Roman times and growing to the impressive Victorian works that form today's gateways to the island. The Island has many other, smaller harbours, landing places and slipways which supported trade, fishing and the gathering of vraic (seaweed).
- 2.7. From the late 17th century and through to the 19th century Guernsey was known as an entrepôt, for its shipping and storage and transport of goods, and also for privateering (the legal removal of goods from non-British vessels). Evidence of this trade and the associated shipbuilding are still seen in the harbours and slipways around the Island and the stone built warehousing which is still in evidence on the St Peter Port waterfront.
- 2.8. The defence of the Island is evidenced by pre-historic earthworks, medieval castles, the network of pre-Martello (loop-hole) towers against French invasion, Victorian garrisons and the Second World War works of Hitler's Atlantic Wall.
- 2.9. Evidence of the spiritual history of the Island begins with menhirs (standing stones) and dolmens (burial chambers) of the pre-Christian past, followed by churches, priories and other religious buildings from the medieval period to the present day.



La Trepied Dolmen, Perelle, St Saviours.



Guernsey Quarrymen.  
Courtesy and copyright of Michael Deane of  
Deanephotos.com and contributors to the website.



Horticulture - growing daffodils.  
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### 3. Context of Guernsey

- 2.10. The quarry industry developed from the late 18th century. By the 19th century stone export became the main industry with over 100 quarries, mainly in the north of the island, and many stone yards around St Sampsons harbour.
- 2.11. Today, the larger quarries have been filled or used as water storage and refuges for nature. Although the vast majority of stone was exported, locally quarried stone is evident everywhere - in the buildings, boundary walls, harbour walls, sea defences, pavements and streets.
- 2.12. Tourism from the 19th century contributed to esplanades, bathing pools, beach kiosks and supporting development.
- 2.13. Public buildings of the 18th, 19th and early 20th century in St Peter Port, and parish halls and schools throughout the island supported social and administrative developments and reflect the civic pride of their time.
- 2.14. The finance industry has also left its own mark, from the early 19th century banks in the High Street and later adaptations of historic buildings in St Peter Port to the recent open plan office buildings.
- 2.15. Whilst overlaid by modern development, the character of the historic environment is remarkably little affected by modern road-building and other infrastructure.
- 3.1. Guernsey is signed up to the Granada Convention for the "Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe", which sets the overall parameters for the protection of our historic environment. It includes identification of properties to be protected, statutory procedures for protection and production of conservation policies.
- 3.2. The States of Guernsey supports the protection of the historic environment through its Strategic Plans, and in particular, through the Strategic Land Use Plan which provides an overarching policy commitment to the historic environment as part of the larger task of balancing economic, social and environmental concerns.
- 3.3. The Land Planning and Development (Guernsey) Law, 2005 governs the identification and protection of Guernsey's historic environment as part of the planning system as a whole. One of its objectives is the protection of the special character and interest of the historic environment in the form of landscapes, areas, sites, monuments and buildings, each of which has different characteristics and different types and levels of protection can be given as appropriate. The Law is further supported by Ordinances and more detailed policy and guidance.
- 3.4. Guernsey has a complex history, which has uniquely shaped its historic environment and the Island we enjoy today. Some of these key influences have been set out in Section 2.



Ladies bathing pool at La Vallette.  
Images courtesy of [www.cipostcard.co.nz](http://www.cipostcard.co.nz)



St Sampsons Harbour.  
Courtesy and copyright of Michael Deane of  
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The Markets, St Peter Port.  
Images courtesy of [www.cipostcard.co.nz](http://www.cipostcard.co.nz)

## 4. The Principles for Sustaining Guernsey's Historic Environment

4.1. Below are set out the 4 Principles which will sustain Guernsey's historic environment into the future and which will influence policy and practice.

Principle

1

**As a community, we recognise our shared interest in sustaining our historic environment.**

- a. Our historic environment is the physical legacy of human activity over centuries and is our shared heritage.
- b. It enriches the life of the present generation.
- c. We have a responsibility to pass it to future generations.
- d. The contribution made by owners and custodians to the historic environment is valuable, their interests will be taken into account alongside the public interest in our heritage.
- e. Government and other public specialists will guide, support, protect and promote partnership, participation, research, understanding and appreciation in the historic environment.

Principle

2

**As a community, we believe that it is of fundamental importance to understand what is important about our historic environment and why.**

- a. We protect, not for 'the sake of it', but because elements of the historic environment have qualities and characteristics of value and importance that we wish to sustain.
- b. If we understand those qualities and characteristics of value, our ability to sustain them will be enhanced.
- c. We need to understand the physical fabric, how it has developed, how it functions and the significance/values that it represents to the community.

## 3

**As a community, we will manage the historic environment so as to sustain its special character and interest.**

- a. Change is inevitable – every generation interacts with the historic environment, which needs to be capable of adapting to change.
- b. Conservation is a process that aims to manage change in ways that sustain special character and interest.
- c. Good conservation encourages maintenance and repair as the foundation of protection.
- d. Change that sustains or does not detract from special interest will be encouraged, but change or destruction that is harmful to that interest must be justified as being on balance in the public interest
- e. Alterations to elements of the historic environment should be carefully considered in the light of understanding its special interest.
- f. High standards of new work should be required.
- g. Change in the historic environment needs to be consistent with other values of the community, such as the health safety and security of the community and the need to make wise use of resources.
- h. The greater the significance of a place to society, the greater the weight that should be attached to sustaining its special character and interest. This concept of proportionality is fundamental to the equitable reconciliation of the public interest in heritage and other public and private interests.

## 4

**As a community, we believe that decisions about the historic environment should be reasonable, transparent and consistent.**

- a. There should be clearly established policies against which decisions can be taken.
- b. The community and the professionals who advise them should be consulted on policy.
- c. Decisions affecting the historic environment shall be proportionate to the importance of what is being protected and to our overall aspiration to sustain it.
- d. Information about decisions should be available to the community.
- e. Advice and support should be available to owners and custodians seeking to sustain their part of the historic environment.

## 5. Special character and interest and protection

5.1. Principle 2 emphasises the need to understand what is important to the community about the historic environment and why - in other words we need to identify what makes a landscape, area, site, monument or building special.

Special character and interest can derive from one or more of the following values:

- The evidence that it can provide about all aspects of the way past generations lived.
- Its architectural, artistic and aesthetic quality.
- Its historic associations and archaeological value.
- The way materials, methods or craftsmanship are displayed.
- The way it represents a particular social or economic aspect of island life.
- The way that different layers of history or changes in architectural style contribute to individual special character
- Its spiritual, commemorative or communal interest.
- Its rarity or uniqueness.

5.2. A combination of these factors leads to the significance of a place. Where a landscape, an area, a site, a monument and a building has a sufficiently high interest it may be protected.



Interior Victor Hugo House, Hauteville, (protected building).



Les Varioufs, Forest (conservation area).  
*Photograph - Environment Department.*



Town House, St Peter Port, (protected building).  
*Photograph - Environment Department.*

## 6. How the planning system supports the way we sustain the historic environment.

- 6.1. The overarching aims of conservation in Guernsey derive from the States' duties under the Law to preserve and enhance the island's built heritage in its various forms. A suite of planning legislation provides 'tools' to support the way we manage change to sustain special character and interest of the historic environment
- 6.2. These tools allow for the designation of landscapes, areas, sites, monuments and buildings for special protection and the creation of policy and guidance through the development plans and statutory guidance to protect the historic environment and these protected places and their settings.
- 6.3. We are seeking to create a clear link between the significance of the heritage to be protected and a proportionate way of managing it through a review of policy and designations. We are currently reviewing the development plan (the Urban Area Plan and the Rural Area Plan), in line with the Strategic Land Use Plan. The development plan will include policies to manage development of the historic environment and conservation area designations that reflect areas the Island recognises as having special interest. The new development plan will also be designating sites of special significance for the first time (see section 8 for a definition of a site of special significance).
- 6.4. We have also commenced a review of the list of protected buildings to ensure that they have been designated appropriately and also to consider other buildings that may be worthy of listing.
- 6.5. A review of the protected monuments list will be undertaken in due course.
- 6.6. In addition we have begun, and will continue to develop detailed policy and guidance in relation to conservation areas and protected buildings through a series of appraisals and guidance.
- 6.7. The current Law, Ordinances, development plans, policy and guidance can be viewed on the Environment Department's website.



Farmhouse, St Saviour.  
*Photograph - Environment Department.*



New thatched roof at Les Cache Farm.  
*Photograph - Environment Department.*



Loop-Hole Towers, L'Ancrese.  
*Photographer - the late Dr Charles David.*

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The four overarching Principles set out the need to sustain, understand and manage our exceptionally fine historic environment and how we wish to manage its vulnerability to change to protect its special character and interest for the present and for the future.
- 7.2. As a community:
- We recognise our shared interest in sustaining our historic environment.
  - We believe that it is of fundamental importance to understand what is important about our historic environment and why.
  - We will manage the historic environment so as to sustain its special character and interest
  - We believe that decisions about the historic environment should be reasonable, transparent and consistent.
- 7.3. This document will be reviewed when appropriate and should be read in association with the Law, Ordinances, development plan, policy and guidance as issued by the States of Guernsey.



Victorian Post Box, (protected monument).



Facade of building, Smith Street, St Peter Port (protected building).



Granite walls The Bridge, (part of the conservation area).  
*Photograph - Environment Department.*

## 8. Definitions

The following are definitions of words used in this publication.

- Conservation** The process of managing change to the historic environment to sustain its special interest, whilst recognising opportunities to reinforce or enhance the fabric, character and appearance for present, as well as future generations.
- Conservation Area** An area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Areas designated through the Development Plan.
- Enhancement** The process of removing negative or harmful elements from a protected landscape, area, site, monument or building or adding or altering it to improve its special character and interest.
- Fabric** The physical material or substance of which the historic environment is formed.
- Historic Environment** All parts of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible or buried.
- Maintenance** Routine work regularly necessary to keep the fabric of the historic environment in good order.
- Preservation** The process of maintaining without alteration the current condition and special character and interest of a place.
- Protected Building** A building, or part of a building, which is of special historic, architectural, traditional or other interest, designated by placing it in the protected buildings list.
- Protected Monument** A monument, structure, artefact, cave, ruin or remains which are of archaeological, historic, traditional, artistic or other special interest, designated by placing it in the protected monuments list.
- Repair** Work beyond the scope of maintenance, to remedy the effects of decay, damage or use.
- Restoration** The process of returning to a known earlier state of a protected landscape, area, site, monument or building, on the basis of convincing evidence, without speculation.
- Setting** The surroundings in which a protected landscape, area, site, monument or building, is experienced, its context. The setting may be the immediate vicinity or may extend some significant distance.
- Significance** The degree of importance of a landscape, area, site, monument or building in local, national or international context. Most of these items which are nationally important will have some level of safeguarding, and include protected monuments, protected buildings, sites of special significance, conservation areas.
- Site of Special Significance** Area with special significance, whether because of archaeological, botanical, geological, scientific, cultural or any other interest, which it is desirable to preserve, enhance or manage. Sites are designated through the Development Plan or a Subject Plan. Designation gives considerable protection through the Law and Ordinances.
- Sustaining** The process of ensuring the meeting of present needs without compromising the ability to meet future needs.

## Further Sources and References

- The Granada Convention. Available from <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/121.htm>
- The Strategic Land Use Plan. Available from <http://www.gov.gg/article/3264/Strategic-Land-Use-Plan-Resource-Plan>
- Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings BS7913:1998, British Standard Institute.
- The Land Planning and Development (Guernsey) Law, 2005.
- The Land Planning and Development (Special Controls). Ordinance, 2007.
- Urban Area Plan.
- Rural Area Plan.
- Protected Building Technical Advice Note 1: The Requirement for Planning Permission.
- Protected Building Technical Advice Note 2: Submitting a Planning Application for a Protected Building.
- Protected Building Technical Advice Note 3: Policies and Guidance for Protected Buildings.
- Conservation Advice Note 1: Your Protected Building.
- Conservation Advice Note 2: Conservation Areas.
- Protected Buildings Consultation Survey 2012 Results.
- Sites and Monuments Record (Antiquities Icon). Available from <http://maps.digimap.gg/>

The current Law, Ordinances, Development Plans, Policy and Guidance, including those listed above, can be viewed on the States of Guernsey's website at <https://gov.gg/planningandbuilding>

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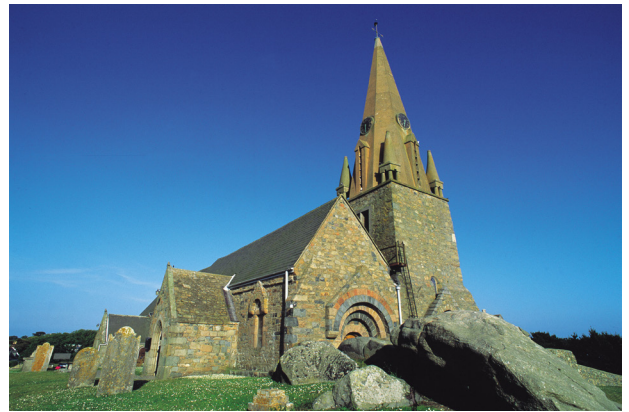
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Go to <https://gov.gg/planningandbuilding> for additional guidance material and planning information, or book a pre-application discussion.



Fort Grey, St Peters.



Vale Parish Church.



La Villette Bathing Pools and Castle Cornet, St Peter Port.  
Photograph - Environment Department.

*This note is issued by the Development & Planning Authority to assist understanding of the provisions of the current planning legislation. It represents the Authority's interpretation of certain provisions of the legislation and is not intended to be exhaustive or a substitute for the full text of the legislation copies of which are available from the Greffe. Electronic copies are also available at [www.guernseylegalresources.gg](http://www.guernseylegalresources.gg). Substantive queries concerning the legislation should be addressed to the Development & Planning Authority by email at [planning@gov.gg](mailto:planning@gov.gg). The Authority does not accept any liability for loss or expense arising out of the provision of, or reliance on, any advice given. You are recommended to seek advice from an independent professional advisor where appropriate.*