



Regeneration and the Historic Environment

Heritage as a catalyst for better
social and economic regeneration



ENGLISH HERITAGE



The historic environment lies at the heart of our sense of place; and England's most attractive and distinctive environments have always been sensitive to their context. Regeneration needs to be done with equal sensitivity if it is to create better places and stronger communities. Understanding how places change, and recognising the significance of their history, is the key to successful and sustainable regeneration.

Successful regeneration means bringing social, economic and environmental life back to an area. It transforms places, strengthens a community's self-image and re-creates viable, attractive places which encourage sustained inward investment. The historic environment is all around us, and includes landscapes, parks and other green spaces, historic streets, areas and buildings, and archaeological sites. Regeneration projects cannot ignore it.

Regeneration is a rural as well as an urban imperative. Although the end result may look very different from urban regeneration, rural development – the revitalisation of rural communities, landscapes and buildings – is necessary to address pockets of social exclusion or to adjust to structural changes in agriculture and the rural economy. Sensitive re-use or promotion of the historic environment can help address these issues.

The Government has recently highlighted the importance of the historic environment in its response to the report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on the role of historic buildings in urban regeneration. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport statement *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future* (2001) and its consultation document *Culture at the Heart of Regeneration* (2004) give further evidence of the valuable role culture, including heritage, plays in regenerating our cities, towns and communities.

WHY RE-USE OF HERITAGE ASSETS IS AT THE HEART OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

English Heritage wants to see the best use made of what already exists. Our involvement in regeneration activity for over two decades has demonstrated that:

1 Re-using existing buildings is a simple way of achieving sustainability. Recent research undertaken in the North West of England by English Heritage found that, based on projections over 30 years, the cost of repairing a typical Victorian terraced house was

between 40 and 60% cheaper (depending on the level of refurbishment) than replacing it with a new home. ¹ Re-using buildings saves waste and reduces the need for new building materials. Demolition and construction account for 24% of the total annual waste produced in the UK. ²

2 Re-using buildings and adapting landscapes help reinforce a sense of place. Investment in the historic buildings and streetscape of Brick Lane, East London by English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and other partners has strengthened the area's distinctive identity. Its revitalisation has helped the growth of Brick Lane as a focus for Bengali festivals and cultural events.

3 New large-scale developments risk losing the fine grain that characterises historic areas. Great care is needed in undertaking new development in sensitive areas to avoid the wholesale amalgamation of plots, straightening of building lines, loss of incidental spaces, flattening of silhouettes, ironing out of irregularities and reducing the mix of uses which all help to integrate the new with the old. The £750m Paradise Street development in Liverpool has been carefully designed to knit the new development into the townscape of the historic Ropewalks area, re-creating some of the area's historic street pattern and re-using many of the vacant historic buildings. ³

4 Re-used buildings can often be sold for a premium compared to a similar new-build property. Many historic buildings are seen to be more desirable than their more recent equivalents. Historic residential properties, for example, often carry a premium. Research suggests pre-1919 houses are worth on average 20% more than an equivalent more recent house. ⁴ The Royal William Yard in Plymouth, a 7ha early nineteenth-century former victualling yard for the Royal Navy, was taken over by the South West of England Regional Development Agency when it became redundant. The subsequent conversion of two of the buildings by developers Urban Splash was such a success that all the apartments were pre-sold in a single day.

Cover image: Speke Airport, Liverpool. These Art Deco listed Grade II* buildings have acted as an effective catalyst in the regeneration of this area of Liverpool. The terminal building is now a flagship Marriott Hotel, a tennis and fitness centre occupies one of the hangars while the other is being converted into a new headquarters for the Littlewoods mail order business. The scheme demonstrates how large, complex historic buildings can be successfully adapted to imaginative new uses.

¹ English Heritage *Heritage Counts* (2003)

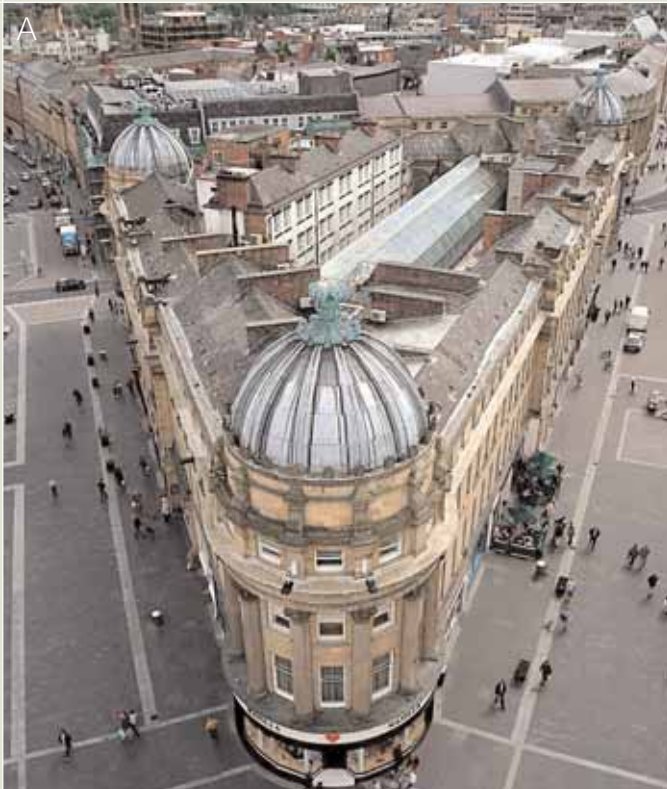
² www.defra.gov.uk/environment/statistics/waste

³ Heritage Lottery Fund *New Life: Heritage and Regeneration* (2004)

⁴ Nationwide Building Society *What Adds Value* (2003)

A Grainger Town, Newcastle upon Tyne. Lying in the historic heart of the city, Grainger Town was conceived and built as a planned city quarter between 1835 and 1842. Designated a conservation area and containing 244 listed buildings, it suffered major economic and social decline in the late twentieth-century. The Grainger Town Partnership was established to tackle this problem and at the end of March 2003 approximately £174m had been attracted into the area including £146m from the private sector. The project is now widely recognised as an exemplary regeneration scheme involving private and public sector partnerships. Its main thoroughfare, Grey Street, was recently voted 'Best Loved Street in Britain' by CABE and BBC Radio 4 listeners.

B The Lace Market, Nottingham. This area of Victorian warehouses and factories were once the centre of the city's historic lace industry. Initial attempts to improve this area were made in the 1960s, but its major regeneration took place in the 1990s. Today the Lace Market contains over 450 firms, a quarter of which keep the tradition of fashion design and production alive while the remainder comprise a mix of cultural and creative industries, retail outlets and pubs/bars. The identity of the Lace Market as a historic quarter has undoubtedly been central to the regeneration of this area as a place to live and work.



5 Restoring the historic environment creates jobs and helps underpin local economies. Work by English Heritage demonstrates that initial heritage investment in heritage-led regeneration projects levers in significant amounts of other capital and helps to sustain and create jobs. **5** The heritage-led regeneration of the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham has ensured that this vibrant historic area remains a thriving centre for the manufacture and retail of jewellery, with 6,000 people employed by 1,500 separate businesses. Nationally, the shortage of workers in many craft skills demonstrates the potential for further growth in employment.

6 An attractive environment can help to draw in external investment as well as sustaining existing businesses of all types, not just tourism-related. The transformation of the redundant eighteenth-century Royal Dockyard in Chatham, as well as drawing in almost two million visitors, has helped attract 100 businesses employing over 1,000 people and had a positive impact on the local economy as a whole estimated at £20m a year. **6** A study of the economic value of the heritage coastlines, national parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the North East demonstrated that through businesses and the effects of tourism these areas generated output of £700m and support 14,000 jobs. The majority of businesses considered the quality of the landscape and the environment to be a factor in their performance. **7**

7 The historic environment contributes to quality of life and enriches people's understanding of the diversity and changing nature of their community. Regeneration has to have the support of local people otherwise it is likely to fail. People are often immensely proud of their local heritage. A recent MORI poll in the North East found that after 'people and a sense of community', 'heritage and the built environment' was what gave the region its special character. **8** Many areas have a rich historic legacy which contributes to local identity and is an important local educational resource.

5 English Heritage *Heritage Dividend 2002*. In the conservation areas included in the study, £10,000 of heritage investment levered in £46,000 match-funding from private sector and public

sources and delivered: 1 new job, 1 safeguarded job, 1 improved home, 41m² of improved commercial floorspace and 103 m² of environmental improvements.

6 Heritage Lottery Fund *New Life: Heritage and Regeneration* (2004)

8 English Heritage *Heritage Counts 2004 North East* (2004)

7 ONE North East *The economic value of the protected landscapes in the North East of England* (2004)

C Lister Mills, Manningham, Bradford. Samuel Cunliffe Lister's vast silk mill complex, listed Grade II*, has stood empty for over a decade. Prolonged attempts to seek a new use took place against a background of continuing theft and vandalism. However, 2004 saw the first phase of a ten year project which will create residential, commercial and community space. The transformation of this large, imposing site will assist in the wider regeneration of the area, and will become an icon for the regeneration potential across the city.

D Ironbridge Gorge, Coalbrookdale, Shropshire. The Ironbridge Gorge played a unique role in the development of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth-century. Its decline in the twentieth-century was reversed following its designation as

a World Heritage Site in 1986. The area has a vibrant community and a wide range of businesses, shops and community services providing employment for 1500 people within the World Heritage Site. Recognition of Ironbridge's social, economic and environmental qualities has been at the heart of the area's continuing successful regeneration.

E Frome, Somerset. Following economic decline over many years, efforts by the local community and the Town, District and County Councils with support from English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and others has reversed the fortunes of this important medieval textile town. The conversion of the derelict former mill in Willow Vale to residential units is just one of the many successful regeneration and enhancement projects which have given the town a new lease of life.



8 Historic places are a powerful focus for community action. The British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA), in an analysis of best practice in urban regeneration, concluded that “historic buildings can act as focal points around which communities will rally and revive their sense of civic pride” and that “ ... care should be taken not to destroy old buildings before their potential is realised”. ⁹ The transformation of the early nineteenth-century St. John's Church in Hoxton, in the London Borough of Hackney, to include a nursery school, a community café, an employment project, a fitness centre as well as its continued use as a church has strengthened its role at the centre of its community without destroying its contribution as a high quality architectural landmark. ¹⁰

9 The historic environment has an important place in local cultural activities. Historic buildings, streets and parks are often key venues for local events. In Queen Square, Bristol, the removal of the inner ring road from the early eighteenth-century square and the redesign of the open space to reflect the original layout enabled a range of cultural events from outdoor cinema to concerts to take place. It also provides informal recreation space and a fitting setting for the surrounding historic buildings.

Mixed use, high-density, human-scale historic neighbourhoods are a model for new sustainable communities.

THE ENGLISH HERITAGE APPROACH TO REGENERATION

It is neither possible nor desirable for English Heritage to engage with every regeneration scheme. ¹¹ As a national body, English Heritage can help with general guidance and advice but local heritage specialists are best placed to understand the significance of a particular area. It will usually be local authority historic buildings officers and archaeological officers who are best able to offer detailed practical advice.

⁹ British Urban Regeneration Association *Learning from Experience: The BURA Guide to Achieving Effective and Lasting Regeneration* (2002)

¹⁰ English Heritage *Heritage Dividend* (2002)

¹¹ English Heritage *Planning and Development in the Historic Environment: A Charter for English Heritage Advisory Services* (2004)

F **Town End Farm, Hawkshead, Cumbria.** The new micro-brewery in this former milking parlour (the white building in the photograph) has created a viable new use for this redundant traditional farm building which helps support the local economy through rural diversification. Not only have the area's pubs, hotels and other businesses benefited from a new high-quality regional product, but the minimal internal and external alterations to the building have helped to protect the character of the National Park.



G **Middlegate Community Garden, Great Yarmouth.** Undertaken as part of the wider heritage and regeneration work within Great Yarmouth, the garden transformed what was formerly an area of derelict land which links two English Heritage properties. Its design, which involved the local community, is one of a number of schemes which are raising the profile of the area and instilling greater public confidence. The area has already seen a decrease in vandalism and anti-social behaviour. The value of a high quality public space is often an important element of many heritage regeneration schemes.

Where decisions are being made about the future of historic buildings, areas or landscapes as part of a regeneration scheme, English Heritage will seek to ensure that their historical, architectural and archaeological significance has been properly assessed. In areas where the historic environment is distinctive, retains its coherence and is valued by the local community, English Heritage will favour an approach which promotes repair and refurbishment as an alternative to outright replacement.

It is essential that decisions about an area's future are based on an informed understanding of the historic environment. This should form part of the masterplanning and design process. An assessment of the historic environment should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity and certainly before detailed proposals are drawn up for the regeneration of an area. As well as identifying assets which are protected through listing, scheduling or conservation area designation, assessments should always take into account the value of the wider historic environment. A range of techniques such as characterisation, conservation planning, impact assessment and archaeological evaluation exist to help with this process. English Heritage aims to encourage and enable such work through the development of training programmes.



A CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESSFUL REGENERATION

Although each regeneration scheme is unique, English Heritage believes there are lessons that are common to successful historic environment regeneration schemes.

- 1 A strong vision for the future** – that inspires people and encourages them to get involved;
- 2 A respect for local residents and businesses** – who have often fought hard to stop an area declining; ensuring they are included in a regeneration partnership means the project starts with community commitment;

H **Lister Park, Bradford.** Opened in 1870, the condition of this Grade II Registered Park deteriorated to such an extent that it was no longer seen as a safe place to visit. A grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the wider regeneration of Bradford involved extensive community and stakeholder consultation. The improvements, which include the restoration of historic features with new contemporary elements, have had a positive impact on the wider area.



3 A tangible link to the past – since places are not created in a vacuum and people need familiar elements, visual reminders and a sense of continuity; landscapes, streets, spaces, buildings and archaeological sites play a part in defining a sense of place;

4 An understanding of the area – knowing what exists and how it came to be makes it easier to plan its future;

5 A respect for what already exists – making sure that places that people value are kept for the future;

6 A record of the area before work starts – so that future generations can understand how the site has evolved;

7 An integrated, sustainable approach – not concentrating on a particular social, economic or environmental consideration or a single use;

8 Achieving the right pace – regeneration that happens too quickly can harm the fabric and the community, while that which happens too slowly fails to create the momentum, commitment and enthusiasm needed to make a scheme a success;

9 The highest quality design and materials – to enhance local distinctiveness and sustain a sense of place that people can be proud of;

10 Early discussions between the community, the local authority and other interested parties – ensuring that options can be discussed and designs modified at an early stage, before too much has been committed.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/regeneration. References to a number of relevant publications are included in the footnotes. For more information and training programmes aimed particularly at the local authority sector see also www.helm.org.uk. Other relevant websites include:

www.biglotteryfund.org.uk
www.bura.org.uk
www.cabe.org.uk
www.cabespace.org.uk
www.culture.gov.uk/historic_environment
www.ehtf.org.uk
www.englishpartnerships.co.uk
www.heritagelink.org.uk
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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