



# Proposed Conservation Principles

## Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Northern Ireland

RTPI Response to the Department for Communities, Historic Environment Division

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October 2021

The Department's Historic Environment Division has consulted on 'Conservation Principles; Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Northern Ireland'. Six Conservation Principles are set out alongside guidance, providing a framework for all aspects of decision making affecting the historic environment. <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc/hedconservationprinciples-publicconsultation/>

RTPI Northern Ireland welcomes the publication of the Conservation Principles. The planning system sets the context for development and creates the enabling conditions for a sustainable built environment. Like any good public service, the planning system requires resources and capacity to deliver outcomes efficiently, effectively, and equitably. Financial support to increase the number of public sector planners employed along with funding for specialist knowledge, such as heritage, and investing in efficiency-saving digital technologies can help support a stronger, proactive and strategic planning system.

The RTPI has long called for the adequate resourcing of the planning system for it to achieve its full potential in addressing the complex and challenging issues it faces.

### **Do you agree with the overall approach to the Conservation Principles as outlined within its introduction for the sustainable management of the Historic Environment?**

Yes, the emphasis it gives to 'place', beyond individual buildings, is important in creating sustainable and high-quality places in Northern Ireland.

The principles themselves are clearly set out. However, the document could expand further on its purpose. There are clearly potential implications for



determining planning applications, therefore the status of the Conservation Principles, as material considerations for planning should be set out. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) will require clear guidance on the status and weight that should be afforded to the Principles in the context of the development management system and how to incorporate them into their Plans at a local level, however we note that Part 2 will address how to apply these principles.

**Do you agree or disagree with the proposed six key principles and their associated aims?**

While we agree in principle with the Principles themselves, managing the historic environment in a changing climate should be recognised within the Principles. There needs to be a clear statement that the historic environment will need to adapt to a changing climate in its maintenance and management. This is likely to require a new approach to the management of historic buildings and places in the future.

**Do you agree with the approach to 'Understanding Significance' of a heritage asset, and the three key interests of archaeological, architectural and historic?**

We agree in principle and support the statement at 7.26 which recognises it may be appropriate to consider other aspects such as authenticity, communal, economic, scientific, social, scientific and symbolic. However, we would advise that there should be guidance to accompany and support this, particularly for stakeholders outside planning.

**Is there any other comment you would like to make on the document content?**

Further information on Part 2 of the document would be useful in forming our position and comments on this consultation.

The Conservation Principles and their guidance contain concepts and definitions which may not be easily understood by those outside planning or heritage. Accompanying guidance to assist community groups and other stakeholders would be helpful along with a clear statement on who the principles and guidance are aimed at.

Are there opportunities to set out some good practice to support the Conservation Principles and help to embed them in our ways of working?



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# RTPI Northern Ireland

Royal Town Planning Institute

**Please highlight any possible unintended consequences of the proposals and any practical difficulties you foresee in implementing them.**

Please see our comments above in relation to resources and heritage skills within Local Planning Authorities.

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe, representing some 26,000 spatial planners. RTPI NI represents the RTPI in Northern Ireland, with 750 members. The Institute seeks to advance the science and art of planning, working for the long-term common good and wellbeing of current and future generations. The RTPI develops and shapes policy affecting the built environment, works to raise professional standards and supports members through continuous education, training and development.

This response has been formed drawing on the expertise of the RTPI NI Policy and Research Forum which includes a cross section of planning practitioners from the private and public sectors and academia from across Northern Ireland.

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