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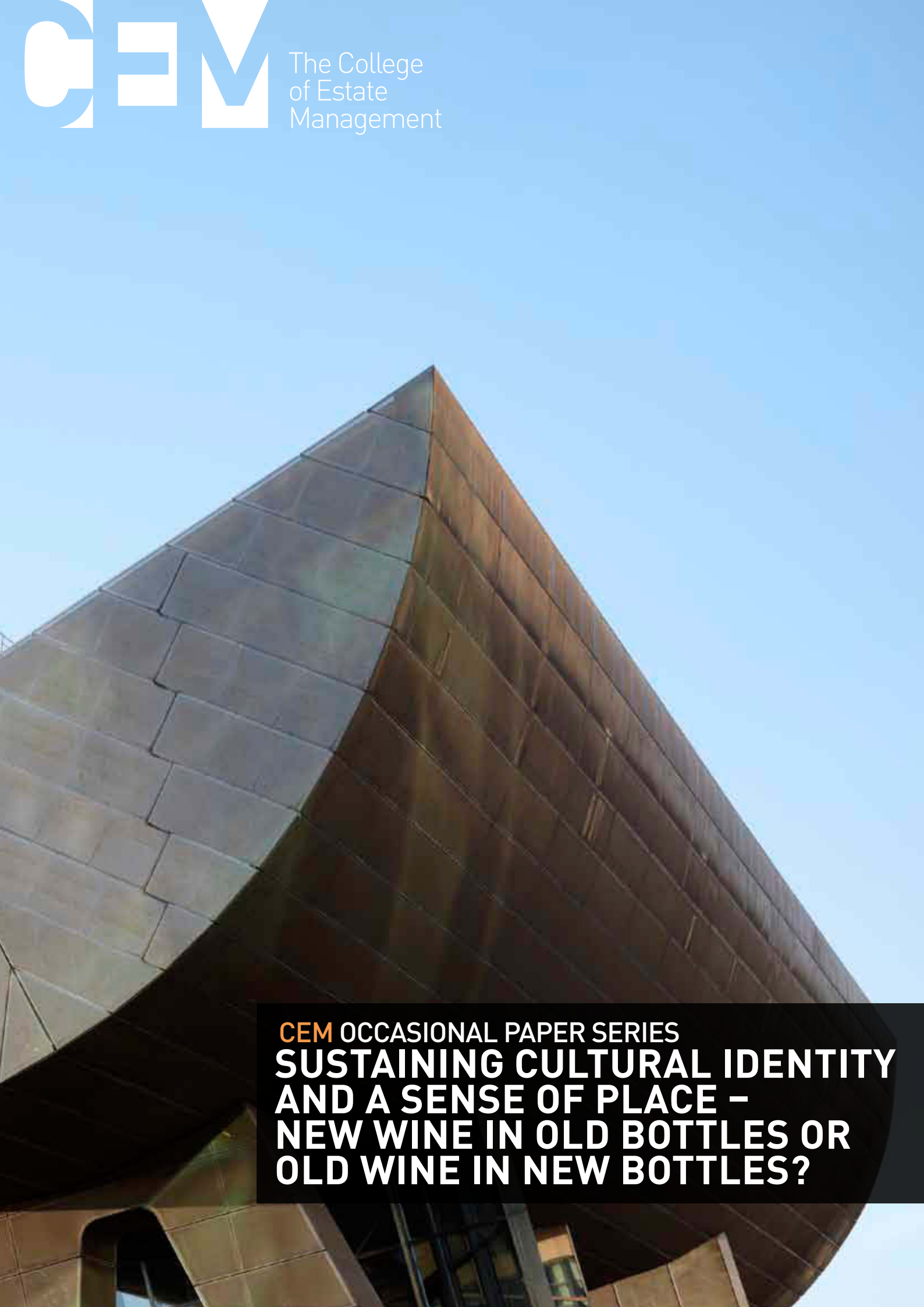

CEM OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES

SUSTAINING CULTURAL IDENTITY AND A SENSE OF PLACE – NEW WINE IN OLD BOTTLES OR OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

The College of Estate Management

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SUSTAINING CULTURAL IDENTITY AND A SENSE OF PLACE – NEW WINE IN OLD BOTTLES OR OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

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ABSTRACT

Recent literature has re-emphasised the relevance of a 'sense of place' to our understanding and appreciation of the historic environment, and to the importance of the historic environment 'in creating places where people want to live and work' (English Heritage 2009: 13). A sense of place has conflicting qualities: it needs to provide a continuous line linking us to the past which gives us our identity, yet it must be relevant to the changing perceptions of succeeding generations. In short, it must recognise the intergenerational legacy of the built environment. A continuum of options is reviewed in this paper. The aim of this is to establish some broad principles as to how we both value and mould the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage into a sense of place that (to paraphrase Brundtland 1987) meets the opinions and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to adapt it to meet their own aspirations and priorities.

1. INTRODUCTION

The perceived relevance of the historic environment has moved swiftly in recent years, from simply a set of iconic structures selected for protection by experts, to places significant to communities, where the wider historic environment has a resonance in creating a sense of place and cultural identity which contribute to the quality of the environment in which people live and work. This has arguably initiated a move towards a greater democratisation of our view of the built heritage because a sense of place must have resonance and meaning for each individual. Significance can be tangible, in that it relates to the structure or design of a building, or intangible, for example where places have special religious or symbolic importance.

Places therefore embody a series of values which underpin their significance, some of which can be measured, for example in financial and/or economic terms. However, it is those less easily measured components of value, for example cultural significance, which defy objective measurement in conventional terms and which are the most problematic. In the UK, a number of policy documents have underlined this, starting with *Power of Place* (English Heritage 2000) and *Sustainable Communities* (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) 2003).

This paper will examine the qualities that comprise a sense of place, using current concepts of significance and value to understand why places are important and how that importance can be categorised.

2. SIGNIFICANCE

It was as recently as 1995 that English Heritage wrote that:

> 'the primary purpose of repair is to restrain the process of decay without damaging the character of buildings and monuments, altering the features which give them their historic or architectural importance, or unnecessarily disturbing or destroying historic fabric'. (Brereton 1995: 2)

John Earl (2003: 73) quotes this when he refers to the nature and interest of a building. What has changed since 2000 is, arguably, the democratisation of the heritage and, in consequence, the tools used to assess its significance and the language used to express that significance.

UK legislation requires that buildings are conventionally listed for their architectural and historic interest, and monuments are scheduled for their archaeological interest, but is this sufficient to deal with modern notions of significance? The debate is not new, and may be seen in the respective works of Sir Nikolaus Pevsner and Sir John Betjeman. Pevsner has the reputation of a data collector and categoriser – the Penguin

Buildings of England series is the testament to his village-by-village description of each county in England. The series was later to extend to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Betjeman, on the other hand, wanted to bring out the spirit and meaning of buildings and places through his publications and television programmes. This is something of an oversimplification of a more complex relationship which is explored by Mowl (2000).

A seminal moment in the development of this democratisation of heritage in the UK was the publication of *Power of Place*. The research demonstrated that 'for most people, the historic environment represents the place in which they live' (English Heritage 2000), as well as being places which they visit. The historic environment has come to be seen as being much wider than just the protected elements: people value their local areas for a variety of reasons. Places are valued not just for their importance to heritage experts, but because of their significance to a much wider range of the population in their search for a sense of cultural identity, including that which can exist at a personalised local level (CURDS *et al*. 2009).

On the international canvas, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 2005) inscribes World Heritage Sites. These are relatively small in number (679 cultural sites worldwide in 2009) and tend to be iconic sites representing important aspects of national history to the state party. The test for inscription is outstanding universal value (OUV). According to Denyer (2009), OUV is not defined in the World Heritage Convention, yet it is a simple concept and it allows 'humankind to value natural and cultural heritage in such a way it transcends and crosses international boundaries'. Denyer stresses that OUV is not a fixed concept but 'will be subject to evolution over time' (Denyer 2009) because value systems change and evolve, and definitions of cultural heritage are becoming broader.

The language used has also changed. Instead of 'importance' and 'interest', the new heritage lexicon refers to 'heritage assets', 'values' and 'significance'. One of the principal sources of this new lexicon is the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS 1999) which introduced the concept of cultural significance:

> 'Places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past and to lived experiences. They are historical records, that are important as tangible expressions of Australian identity and experience. Places of cultural significance reflect the diversity of our communities, telling us about who we are and the past that has formed us and the Australian landscape. They are irreplaceable and precious. ... The Burra Charter advocates a cautious approach to change: do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained.' (Australia ICOMOS 1999:1)

Article 1 of the charter defines 'cultural significance' as 'aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations'. It reinforces the notion that the current generation is the steward of heritage for future generations, but expands the reasons for

conserving beyond the aesthetic and historic to a much wider range of both tangible and intangible values.

In art and object conservation, this is termed 'value-led' conservation. According to Viňas (2005: 79):

> 'The core notion behind value-led conservation is that conservation decision making should be based on the analysis of the values an object possesses for different people to reach an equilibrium among all the parties involved.'

In the UK, English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* (2008) echoes the wider and more democratic definition of heritage found in *Power of Place*: '[The historic environment] gives distinctiveness, meaning and quality to the places in which we live. … Heritage values represent a public interest in places, regardless of ownership.' (English Heritage 2008a). English Heritage proposes a set of values: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal. Each of these categories can be expanded into further subsets. For instance, evidential value derives from the ability of the place to provide information, which may be archaeological, constructional, ecological, etc.

This sense of place is developed by an earlier document, the *Nara Document on Authenticity* (ICOMOS 1994), where Article 12 states: '… the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong.'

Characterisation is a tool which is being used increasingly to look at areas, and much of the methodology derives from the characterisation of landscapes. Looking at the historic environment in terms of landscapes reinforces this area-based view of heritage, which chimes with the wider concepts of heritage promoted by *Power of Place* and the Burra Charter, for instance.

The methodology for historic area assessments is described in English Heritage's *Understanding Place – Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice*, which also summarises the new rationale for viewing heritage in terms of areas:

> 'There is widespread acceptance that the historic environment is ubiquitous, not confined to a series of discrete "monuments", and the Government's ratification of the European Landscape Convention in 2007 has entrenched this recognition more firmly in Government policy.' (2010: 4)

Another tool which is being developed by English Heritage (2008b) is the assessment of views. Views relate to context and setting, and the concept emerges from the protected views of particular parts of London, and is being developed for wider application.

3. THE VALUE OF BUILT HERITAGE – MODERN DEFINITIONS OF VALUE

3.1 Heritage valuation

The contributions made by our built heritage to our culture and our society have long been recognised, and have already been mentioned in this paper. At one level, and to borrow Ben MacIntyre's phrase (MacIntyre 2010), 'Buildings are where we store our memories', and collective memory is, of course, important. It is, however, essentially backward looking, and a number of studies (for example, English Heritage 2000; Putnam 2000; Urban Practitioners 2005; Blaug *et al*. 2006; Ela Palmer Heritage 2008; Rypkema 2009a) have concluded that our built heritage should also be valued in a forward-facing role in the development of modern sustainable communities, defined by the UK Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2003 as communities offering:

- a sense of community and belonging;
- tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures, backgrounds and beliefs;
- friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour in neighbourhoods;
- opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities, including for children and young people;
- low levels of crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour with visible, effective and community-friendly policing;
- social inclusion and good life chances for all. (ODPM 2003)

These goals, essentially developmental and societal in nature, are usually predicated upon changes in indicators such as income, employment statistics, housing provision, crime statistics, instances of anti-social behaviour, physical and mental health, and educational attainment, and a number of studies have concluded that there is a direct link between these measurable indicators and the 'sense of place' which an overt appreciation and interpretation of our built heritage can help to foster (Ela Palmer Heritage 2008; ODPM 2004). Other commentators (for example, Putnam (2000) in the USA and the Office of National Statistics (2001) in the UK) have identified additional 'social capital' indicators such as community cohesion, social inclusion, civic virtue, social bonds and community networks as being equally important.

Ela Palmer Heritage, in a report prepared for the Agencies Co-ordinating Group (Ela Palmer Heritage 2008) presents a range of case studies indicating various ways in which heritage-led regeneration projects have attempted, with varying degrees of success, to address these developmental goals; and Plimmer *et al*. (2008), in a research report sponsored by the BRE Trust, address a range of similar issues in the context of heritage-led social housing regeneration.

These often intangible and frequently difficult to quantify values form a major plank in the UK government's recently published planning strategy for dealing with the historic environment

in England, Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5 (Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) 2010), which states that one of the government's overarching aims is to conserve England's heritage such that '… the positive contribution … [of heritage] … to local character and sense of place is recognised and valued' (Clause 7), and that, where proposed development threatens heritage assets, then consent should be refused unless '… the substantial harm to or loss of significance is necessary to deliver substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss …' or '… the harm to or loss of the heritage asset is outweighed by the benefits of bringing the site back into use …' (Policy HE9.2). Planning authorities faced with such proposals are therefore required to make a value judgement as to whether or not the public benefits delivered by the scheme are greater or less than the value of the heritage assets compromised or destroyed.

Crucially, however, PPS5 includes no guidance whatsoever as to how, or even on what basis, this value judgement should be made, and the absence of any workable methodology must surely lead to the danger of legal challenges in which the old arguments between heritage conservers on the one hand and commercial business interests on the other will once again be rehearsed. Almost inevitably there will be some attempt to reduce the arguments to some easily recognisable medium of exchange, leading to uncomfortable parallels with the views expressed by Professor Randall Mason of the University of Pennsylvania in 2006 when, in the course of a discussion on capturing the public value of heritage reported verbatim in Clark (2006: 62), he suggested that:

> 'In the US you have to prove that heritage pays; that to protect something will be more profitable than neglecting it. But you also have to realise that in the case of the heritage vs. Walmart the heritage will never win.'

3.2 Monetary value

With Professor Mason's comments in mind, Smith (2010) posits that, in recent years, the justification of schemes to preserve historic buildings by making them pay their way and, perhaps to a lesser extent, the dilemma facing central funders of how much of our available limited resources should be spent on which of a bewildering multiplicity of apparently worthwhile conservation schemes is seeking funding at any particular point in time, has driven us into a preoccupation with defining the 'value' of heritage assets in terms of money, and it is therefore necessary to review this issue in some depth.

The true 'monetary value' of a building is notoriously difficult to define in an objective way. For example, a professional valuer's opinion of the value of a building will be different depending upon the purpose for which the valuation is to be made (for example a valuation for insurance purposes may be very different from a valuation for sale, and even a valuation for sale may vary depending upon the reasons for the sale, the financial circumstances of the seller, etc.). Scarrett (2003) discusses in detail the standard real estate valuation techniques which may be used, and the *RICS Valuation Standards* – the Red Book – (RICS 2010) sets out the rules of good practice which govern the way in which such valuations should be made.

It might be thought that the clearest indication of the observable 'monetary value' of a historic building could be gained from offering the building for sale on the open market, either for refurbishment, as an operational business asset, or for conversion to an alternative use. In this case, the observable 'market value' will be the price a prospective purchaser is prepared to pay, often at auction, but even this may be a poor indicator of the building's true worth. The auction price is, after all, simply a representation of the potential worth (the economic utility?) of the building to the highest bidder at that point in time, subject to factors like the behaviour of any competing participating bidders, the cost of any other opportunities available at the time (in other words the opportunity cost of the purchase), and perhaps the seller's opinion of the worth of the building as reflected in any reserve price set.

In light of the above, it might appear that 'market value' is largely useless in assessing the value of a heritage asset, but there are other facets of the property market which can provide some useful pointers to the possible value of built heritage, at least in comparison with other types of property. For example, in its seminal *Power of Place* study, English Heritage writes that:

> 'In 1998 the investment return on listed office property was 11.9%, compared with 11.4% for unlisted property. Over 18 years, listed and unlisted office property has achieved near identical returns (8.8% as against 8.9%). The intangible value of using well-loved buildings which add character to an area is difficult to measure, but is recognised by businesses that give high priority to employee and customer satisfaction.' (Section 18)

These figures are supported by the investment analysts Investment Property Databank (2002 rev. 2006); and by property consultancy, Drivers Jonas, in its *Heritage Works* study conducted for English Heritage:

> 'In residential use, well-converted or restored historic buildings are often much more valuable per square foot than new buildings. Blackheath is a good example of an area where older houses are worth a lot more than the newer ones, partly on aesthetics, partly on quality of build. It is hard to think of many examples of good residential conversions being less valuable per square foot than new build residential.' (Drivers Jonas 2006: 8)

Finally, it should be noted that Sayce *et al*. (2009) (in a study on behalf of RICS and HM Treasury) propose yet another methodology for the monetary valuation of historic assets, this time from an accounting and financial reporting perspective.

All the above are indicators of the monetary value of heritage assets in particular circumstances, and are, of course, useful in the specific contexts to which they directly apply, but it is clear that monetary value alone is a poor indicator of the holistic worth of a historic building, and that a purely financial evaluation will not reflect the true value of the asset in terms of those other dimensions of social significance outlined earlier. We are therefore left with the problem of how such issues might be objectively assessed.

3.3 Economic value

An alternative, and perhaps more appropriate, approach to the evaluation of the true worth of a historic building may be to take a wider view of the impact of the monetary contribution of a historic building based upon its contribution to the local or national economy – indeed some commentators suggest that an economic evaluation should underpin any justification for development proposals affecting a historic building:

> '… the desire to preserve must ultimately be a rational economic and commercial choice; problems will arise where buildings are preserved only as a consequence of legal and land use planning controls'. (Tiesdell *et al*. 1996: 11)

A wide variety of techniques for assessing economic value have been developed, including economic impact studies (Listokin and Lahr 1997), cost/benefit analysis (Nas 1996), and the various substitution pricing mechanisms (e.g. contingent valuation (Bateman and Turner 1995) and revealed preference techniques (Bateman 1995; Bateman *et al*. 2002)). These techniques are reviewed in summary in Smith (2010); and an excellent review of the early literature, together with some worked examples, is presented in Allison *et al.* (1996).

Of these, economic impact studies have probably been the most widely used, mostly employing survey techniques of one kind or another and providing varying degrees of detail. At a national level, for example, it was reported that:

> 'In 2006, 9.8 million (30%) of overseas visitors to the UK visited castles, churches, monuments or historic houses, spending £5.4bn (34% of all overseas spend) while they were in the UK.' (DCLG/Department for Culture Media and Sport 2009: 30)

Drivers Jonas reported that at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester:

> '… for every £1 spent by visitors at the museum, £12 is spent elsewhere in the economy. With 300,000 visitors spending £1.5m in 2000, the contribution to the prosperity of the region was £18m. To this can be added the goods and services purchased by the museum from local businesses, the employment of 120 people, and the investment in new exhibitions and building work.' (Drivers Jonas 2006: 8), citing comments made by Patrick Green, Director of the Museum, in his Lecture to the European Museum Forum delivered in Gdansk in 2001)

Much more detailed, but essentially local, economic impact assessments would be expected to form a major plank in a project conservation plan.

A number of researchers in heritage conservation have reported studies using the economic techniques outlined above in various parts of the world (for example, Ost and van Droogenbroeck 1998; Navrud and Ready 2002; Mason 2005; eftec 2005b). In the UK, it was reported that:

> 'Case studies across Britain have been evaluated, and have proved that regeneration of all types can revive areas of economic slump, attracting business and tourism

> and raising property values. A process will then occur whereby physical and functional revitalisation leads to economic revitalisation.' (Ela Palmer Heritage 2008: 4)

Examples of such studies, cited in *The Heritage Dividend Methodology* (Urban Practitioners 2005) and based upon research carried out for English Heritage, include studies on the economic impact of waterways restoration (Ecotec 2001 and 2003) and townscape regeneration (Grover and Reeve 2003), but Urban Practitioners make the point that there is, as yet, '… no agreed method for reliably transferring values between different sites'. (Urban Practitioners 2005: 8)

eftec (2005a), however, in an extremely detailed review of the potential use of these techniques in a heritage context, questions their validity and, while stopping short of concluding that they are valueless, makes the point that there is usually a lack of sufficient reliable data to enable such appraisals to be made with any degree of accuracy.

3.4 The evaluation of social values

The problems involved in measuring the social value of the historic environment were considered at some length in an initial study carried out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) and Atkins Heritage for the National Trust (IFA 2004), and a preliminary set of indicators which might be used to evidence social value was identified. A subsequent study by Ela Palmer Heritage (2008) reviewed the evaluation of heritage-led regeneration projects and their impact on social capital. A substantial body of evidence is presented to show that, provided the project concerned has the broad support of the community, there is a strong likelihood that successful completion will deliver significant improvements in community cohesion and social inclusion. Conversely, it is argued that where the built heritage becomes derelict or has no obvious use, then problems of low community cohesion and social exclusion are magnified.

It has also been proposed by some observers (see Clark 2006 for a good general summary of views) that these numerically indeterminate qualities could be taken to represent the 'public value' (Moore 1995) of heritage, but so far these qualities have proven extremely difficult to measure in practice. This has led commentators like Blaug *et al*. to conclude that 'public value is not a standard unit' (2006: 25). They therefore propose that 'public value = public responsiveness to refined preferences', and that a series of performance indicators could perhaps be developed to provide some sort of objective measure (2006: 24). A variation on this approach is the use of typologies to describe different aspects of cultural significance, a technique addressed at length in Worthington and Bond (2008).

The issue of 'cultural value' is also taken up by economist David Throsby (Throsby 2001 and 2006), who argues that the cultural value of heritage, defined as the sum of authenticity, aesthetic, spiritual, historical, symbolic and social values in terms of a sense of identity and place, may well exceed their economic or financial value, a view supported by, among others, Randall Mason, who writes that:

> 'The value of historic preservation need not be expressed and analyzed only in quantitative terms. Qualitative expressions of the value of preservation often are dismissed by economists simply because they are not susceptible to standard economic (mathematically driven) methods of analysis. But these cultural values – resisting easy quantification and mathematical treatment – are essential to the nature of historic preservation and they must somehow remain part of the discourse on decision-making and other economic discourses on preservation. In other words, applying standard quantitative, market-derived measures of historic preservation will not suffice – a priori – to express the full value of preservation as cultural expression and public good.' (Mason 2005: 3)

Hewison and Holden (2006) also explore the issue of cultural value, and present an analysis in which it is seen as comprising the sum of:

- the individual intellectual, emotional and spiritual experience of the heritage (termed the 'intrinsic value');
- the ancillary economic effects such as urban regeneration which may derive from the asset (termed the 'instrumental value');
- the value which is created in the public mind by the way in which the asset is presented (termed the 'institutional value').

Hewison and Holden also identify three groups to whom these values are important: the public, politicians and policymakers, and the heritage professionals. To these we might also usefully add owner-occupiers.

Clark (2001) points out that, in a national or an international context, recognition of the asset through listing or scheduling provides some indication of the measure of its importance, the 'value', but what about assets where the significance may be geographically local, or may apply only to some particular, perhaps minority, community group? These issues are much more difficult to resolve satisfactorily, particularly when different stakeholders hold different views of the relative importance of an asset, each of which is perhaps equally worthy in its own way, yet they may all be diametrically opposed. Clark also stresses that the 'overall value' should be made explicit through conservation plans based upon evidence, and the provision of evidence is an important plank in the planning process as set out in PPS5. This view is plainly sound, but there is a danger that where 'evidence-based' documentation such as this is used to support either competitive applications for funding or planning applications, then those schemes which will succeed may not in fact be the most 'valuable' but those using the most persuasive advocacy.

The evaluation of social impacts is plainly much more difficult and, by its nature, more subjective than financial or economic analysis. Further, as Ela Palmer Heritage (2008) points out, the data available in this context are generally survey-based, sometimes of questionable quality, qualitative and anecdotal rather than quantitative and factual. Lasting social change is also frequently a very slow process. Observable

changes in factors such as civic virtue, community cohesion and social inclusion therefore tend to be incremental in nature, and frequently take a long time to become obvious to an external observer. While such development may eventually give rise to economic benefits, it is likely that they may not be measurable in the short or medium term. The performance indicators advocated by Blaug *et al*. (2006) may therefore be both difficult and time consuming to construct and test. While the development of robust tools to measure developments in social values arising from heritage-led regeneration is plainly a priority, there is also a very real danger that the current financial climate will result in lip service only being paid to the problem – in essence the issue is in danger of being 'kicked into the long grass'.

3.5 Other dimensions of value – embodied energy

The energy embodied within existing buildings (that is, the amount of energy involved in constructing the building in the first place, including not only the energy embodied in the construction process but also that required for the preparation and manufacture of components, transportation of materials to the site, any alterations, and repairs and maintenance carried out in its lifetime) is considerable and has long been championed by heritage conservers as a factor for consideration in the 'renovate/adapt or rebuild' debate, but has usually been considered by developers to be of relatively minor importance. English Heritage (2003: 8), however, concluded that:

> 'The total energy that has already been used in the construction of a typical Victorian terrace is equivalent to the amount of energy (in fuel terms) that could drive a car five times round the earth, or half the distance from the earth to the moon. Retaining and reusing the existing building stock prevents that energy from being wasted and increases resource productivity.'

Moreover, current concerns with climate change and government commitments to reduce future 'greenhouse gas' emissions have caused the issue to attain a new level of importance. Significant research has been carried out in this area in the past (see, for example, the *Heritage Counts* studies (English Heritage 2003 and 2004)), and a number of research projects are known to be in progress at the time of writing, but have yet to publish their findings.

The value of heritage buildings is certain to become a much more significant element in the adaptive reuse debate in the near future, and it is plainly important that clear baselines and a robust and generally accepted calculation methodology should be developed as a matter of urgency.

4. A CONTINUUM OF POSSIBILITIES

Article 2 of the Council of Europe Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (the 'Faro Convention') defines cultural heritage as:

> 'a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.' (Council of Europe 2005)

The same article defines a 'heritage community' as consisting of 'people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations'. Smith (2006) also has pointed to the value of the 'cultural tool' of heritage to express a community's sense of identity.

The theme that emerges here is the significance of the 'sense of place' and its interrelationship with sustainability. The publication by English Heritage of the 2009 *Heritage Counts* survey has reminded us of the relevance of a sense of place to our understanding and appreciation of the historic environment, and to the importance of the historic environment 'in creating places where people want to live and work'. This echoes the vision in English Heritage's earlier study *Power of Place* (2000), and of the UK government in its 2003 Sustainable Communities plan: 'Places where people want to live and will continue to want to live'.

A sense of place has conflicting qualities: it needs to provide a continuous line linking us to the past which gives us our identity, yet must be relevant to the changing perceptions of succeeding generations. In short, it must recognise the intergenerational legacy of the built environment.

Do we need to re-examine the significance and values that comprise cultural heritage? We can all agree that older elements should be protected, but do not necessarily agree on the value of more recent heritage. In the UK, the virtues of 18th- and 19th-century buildings became generally recognised only in the mid- to late 20th century. Twentieth-century buildings are still a matter of debate. The fact that these perceptions are subject to change over time is a reminder that sustainability requires some humility on the part of each individual generation as we act as the stewards of the heritage assets in question until such time as they are passed on to our successors.

Ben MacIntyre has commented that 'place is a portal to history more powerful than any textbook'. (MacIntyre 2010). However, critics such as Mullin (1971), Wright (1985), Hewison (1987 and 1989) and Pawley (2005) have argued over many years that the protection of too many heritage assets inhibits the rhythm of change in our built environment in the face of concerns about economic evolution and energy security, and uncertainty about climate stability. They suggest that this is symptomatic of a view of the past that is in varying degrees sanitised, sentimentalised and distorted at the expense of innovation, thus preventing the future needs of the population being accommodated.

The UK government's *Statement on the Historic Environment for England 2010* recognises that 'no-one would claim that retaining existing buildings is automatically the best choice' (HM Government 2010: 9). However, it goes on to state that:

> 'there should not be a presumption that new build will be better. Research has demonstrated that it is possible to make cost effective improvements to historic buildings which save energy without damaging their appearance and contribution to the quality of the local environment. The options available in each case should be examined thoroughly and with the full range of relevant professional advice.'

If we are to examine these options as a prelude to conserving the tangible assets that reflect our current view of what our heritage represents, a fundamental question which we have to answer is whether the protection of our heritage is synonymous with maintaining the same uses in the same structures, or whether we need to be alert to a continuum of possibilities that also embraces both securing new uses for the old structures (the provision of 'new wine' in the 'old bottles' of our built heritage) and housing cultural assets within new structures (where 'new bottles' are being created for the 'old wine' of cultural heritage).

In undertaking such an exploration, we already have a growing body of evidence of the preservation, reconstruction and reuse of historic structures within the European context. If we focus on the mid/late 19th century onwards, the conversion of the buildings constructed between 1830 and 1904 occupied by the former fruit, vegetable and flower market at Covent Garden, London into a speciality retail centre in the late 1970s is a case in point. Herzog and de Meuron's equally well-documented work in designing the rebirth of the former Bankside power station (constructed on London's South Bank between 1947 and 1963) as Tate Modern in the 1990s demonstrates that, as noted previously, our attitude towards more modern structures is becoming more receptive as the distance of time facilitates a growing sense of appreciation, and it is possible to identify examples on each point of this continuum.

Thus, if we commence with the option of only limited external or internal change, we can recognise that this is an ambition that has driven the conservation of the most architecturally, historically and/or culturally significant examples of global built heritage stretching back over many centuries. However, even within the context of the protection of late-19th- and 20th-century structures, a fierce debate is currently being waged regarding the proposals by the UK National Health Service (NHS) to dispose of the Grade I listed Finsbury Health Centre designed by Berthold Lubetkin in the mid-1930s.

FINSBURY HEALTH CENTRE

This building has been described by the architect currently undertaking a feasibility study for its repair as 'still a vital and deeply-loved resource for its local community – many of the current patients are children or grandchildren of the original ones' (Williams 2010). The NHS Primary Care Trust, while acknowledging its responsibility for finding an appropriate future use, has commented that 'our job is to provide quality healthcare services in modern and suitable premises that are accessible to all local residents. We're not here to look after historic buildings' (Williams 2010). As a Grade I listed structure, the Health Centre is regarded as being of the highest architectural quality, but clearly in this instance the balance between the social and economic dimensions of a sustainable future is proving elusive.

If we move along the continuum a little to consider an example of how we might introduce some 'new wine' into an 'old bottle', the restoration and conversion of the Midland Hotel at Morecambe, Lancashire demonstrates how sustainable reuse can be secured. Contemporary with the Finsbury Health Centre, this Grade II* listed art deco building was an iconic example of flamboyant interwar seaside resort construction, but had fallen into economic and physical decline by the end of the 20th century. The development company, Urban Splash, acquired the property in 2003 and undertook a scheme combining restoration and the introduction of new elements into the internal and external fabric with the hotel business in 2008 (English Heritage 2009).

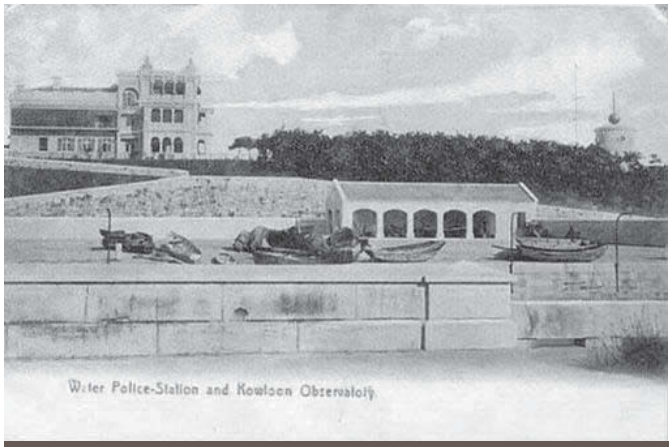
MIDLAND HOTEL, MORECAMBE

However, in this instance the contribution of the building to the local sense of place may be affected by proposals for new mixed-use development on adjacent land; we should not lose sight of the fact that sustainable conservation may need to be balanced by financially more productive, enabling development.

An example of more radical change is the conversion and restoration of the listed late-19th-century Marine Police Headquarters in Hong Kong. This superb group of buildings (pictured before 1907, top right), was constructed in 1884 and is scheduled as a monument. It occupies a prominent position atop a small hill in Tsim Sha Tsui and was one of the four oldest surviving government buildings in Hong Kong. The group comprises the main building with the stable block to the rear, and the Round House, Hong Kong's original time-ball tower, seen on the extreme right of the picture. The complex also includes a now redundant Grade III listed fire station building dating from the 1920s, situated at the south-eastern corner of the site.

The complex became redundant in 1996, and was subsequently sold by government tender for conversion as a boutique hotel. The completed scheme (pictured right centre) has met with mixed reviews!

As a final example, what if the significance associated with a place lies not in buildings but in the association of that location with particular figures or some other cultural legacy? Here, opportunities exist for sustaining the value of the 'old wine' of cultural heritage within a 'new bottle' represented by an entirely modern (and sometimes radically designed) building. Structures in the UK such as the Tate Gallery, St Ives, Cornwall; the Lowry in Salford, Greater Manchester; the Rocket House in Cromer, Norfolk; and the proposed Turner Centre in Margate, Kent capitalise upon significant cultural connections to provide a stimulus for the regeneration of fading local economies.



MARINE POLICE HEADQUARTERS, KOWLOON

MARINE POLICE HEADQUARTERS, KOWLOON

THE LOWRY, SALFORD

Not all structures lend themselves to ready solutions if their configuration provides a serious challenge to securing change, as the ongoing attempts to implement a viable conversion scheme for the Grade II* listed Battersea power station demonstrate. Designed by Giles Gilbert Scott (who also was responsible for Bankside power station) and built in phases between 1929 and the mid-1950s, electricity generation ceased in 1983. Since then, a series of major proposals, primarily orientated towards leisure and retail uses, have so far failed to make sufficient progress, despite English Heritage having no objection in principle to the redevelopment of the site or the conversion and reuse of the existing building (Donatantonio 2010).

Nonetheless, the fact that a building may be unusual does not automatically render it incapable of viable reuse; the Tate Modern scheme mentioned above is one such example; another is the conversion of the former Oxford prison into modern hotel accommodation for the Malmaison chain, as part of a wider-ranging scheme associated with the medieval castle site in the city undertaken by Trevor Osbourne and Oxford Castle Ltd with a consortium of funding partners. The 19th-century prison structure is linked to new buildings as part of a mixed-use scheme (see Dowden 2006) that received the RICS Project of the Year award in 2007.

Similarly, 'new wine' in the form of entirely modern structures (whether free-standing or extensions to existing buildings) designed to house new functions in highly sensitive surroundings to complement established uses can be consistent with the wish to respect the sense of place.

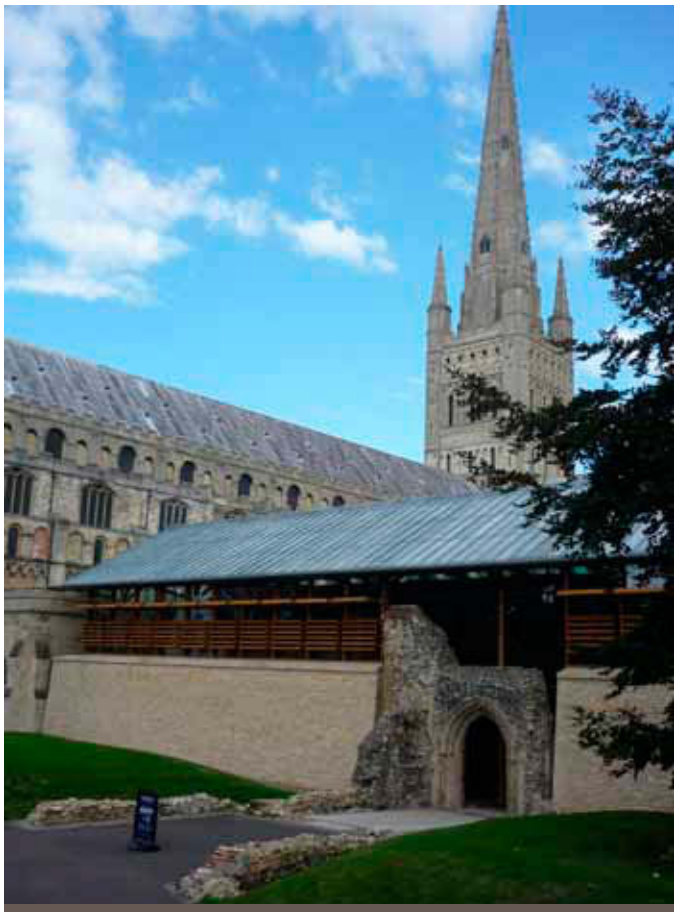
OXFORD CASTLE

An important influence here is BS 7913, *Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings*, which sets out criteria for additions and for new buildings in historic settings. The document observes: 'In much the same way that successful artists have regard to the settings in which their works are to be placed and respond positively to the constraints which these contexts impose, so good buildings in historic settings depend ultimately on the knowledge, ability and intellectual ambition of the architect.' (British Standards Institute 1998: 13). Examples that may be said to reflect this advice are a trio of significant projects constructed in Norwich. These comprise Castle Mall (designed by Lambert Scott Innes next to the 11th-century castle and winner of the RTPI Silver Jubilee Cup for Planning Achievement in 1994); and two schemes designed by Hopkins Architects – the Forum (2001) adjacent to the market place: the Grade I listed St Peter Mancroft church and the Grade II listed City Hall; and the refectory at Norwich Cathedral (2004), both of which have won RIBA awards for architecture.

The variety of these examples supports Thèrond's assertion (2010: 32) that the framework represented by the Faro Convention is not a straitjacket for its signatory states, but rather that 'it is a long-term process prompting a fresh view of heritage in order to make the most of its potential not only in terms of short-term commercial benefits but also in terms of improved quality of life for communities.'

CASTLE MALL, NORWICH

THE FORUM, NORWICH



THE REFECTORY, NORWICH CATHEDRAL

5. CONCLUSIONS

If conservation is regarded as 'the careful management of change', in reviewing this continuum of opportunities we suggest two key principles are embedded in our approach to securing the most appropriate and sustainable outcome for any project.

First, in seeking to secure a viable outcome, all stakeholders must be clear at the outset as to the value and significance of the heritage assets with which they are dealing. This will influence the necessary attention to detail in design, care and skill in the choice of materials and finishes and in their application and awareness of the constraints presented to both project and post-completion management.

Secondly, we must appreciate the value of compromise – the spirit of humility referred to earlier. We have to recognise that there is a balance between what we might lose and what we might gain from undertaking the scheme and to satisfy ourselves that what emerges will be worth that compromise.

The American economist Donovan Rypkema has written extensively in recent years about the role of heritage conservation in sustainable development (Rypkema 2005, 2008, 2009a and 2009b). He suggests that 'if we go back to the graphic representation of sustainable development … heritage conservation is, in fact, the only strategy that is simultaneously environmental responsibility, economic responsibility and social/cultural responsibility' (2009b: 4). The challenge we face is how to mould both the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage into a sense of place that (to paraphrase Brundtland 1987) meets the opinions and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to adapt it to meet their own aspirations and priorities.

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PHOTOGRAPHS – ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finsbury Health Centre
(*Source*: Phil Leverton)

Midland Hotel, Morecambe
(*Source*: Urban Splash)

Marine Police Headquarters, Kowloon
(*Source*: Adrian Smith)

Marine Police Headquarters, Kowloon
(*Source*: unknown)

The Lowry, Salford
(*Source*: Phil Leverton)

Oxford Castle
(*Source*: William Russell)

Castle Mall, Norwich
(*Source*: Phil Leverton)

The Forum, Norwich
(*Source*: Phil Leverton)

The Refectory, Norwich Cathedral
(*Source*: Phil Leverton)

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