

Historic England

Fact Sheet: Listing and Places of Worship



Who are we?

Historic England protects and brings new life to the heritage that matters to us all, so it lives on and is loved for longer. This includes buildings, designed landscapes such as parks and gardens, archaeology and much more.

What are listed buildings?

- Listing gives **legal protection** to special buildings across the country. Buildings protected through listing are called **listed buildings**.
- Anyone can apply to Historic England to have a building listed - you don't have to be an expert on architecture or history to apply.
- Historic England assesses applications for listing and makes recommendations to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), who take the final decision.
- When we assess a building for listing, we look at whether it has **special interest**. This means the things that make the building special and worthy of protection through listing.
- This special interest can be because of the building's **architecture** (how it looks, how it was built etc), because of its **history** (for instance a strong connection to a nationally important person or event), or **a combination of both**.
- Buildings can be listed at Grade II, II* or I, depending on how important they are. The majority (nearly 92%) of buildings are listed at Grade II.
- Not all historic buildings will have special interest, and there are other ways to protect and celebrate buildings which don't meet this criteria.

What is the National Heritage List for England?

The record of each listed building (known as a list entry) is included on the **National Heritage List for England** (known as the NHLE, or the List), a public database that contains information on **England's protected heritage**.

Can we make changes to our listed place of worship?

- Once a building is listed, changes which might affect its special interest have to be managed through the planning system.
- This doesn't stop changes and improvements being made, but you may have to apply for **listed building consent** (a type of permission) to allow you to make any changes that might affect the building's special interest. To find out if you need to apply for listed building consent (or any other legal requirement) please contact your local Historic England office (see next page).
- Decisions on listed building consent applications are made by the **local planning authority**. In some cases, local planning authorities are required to notify or consult Historic England.

How does Historic England support faith groups who use listed buildings?

- We provide support for faith communities using historic buildings for worship and other uses.
- We offer advice on sensitively adapting spaces and installing new facilities so that places of worship can be used for a wide range of purposes. We can also offer advice for faith communities who wish to make their buildings more resilient to climate change.
- We can also advise on grants that may be available to faith communities caring for a historic building.

Can places of worship and other faith buildings be listed?

- There are nearly 380,000 entries for listed buildings on the **National Heritage List for England**, including over 16,000 places of worship. Listed places of worship include buildings used by a wide range of faith communities.
 - Sometimes a listed building has been used by more than one different faith group since it was built. For instance, the **Gurdwara Sahib in Woolwich**, which was originally built as a Methodist Church and converted for use by the Sikh community in the 1970s.
 - There are also listed buildings used by faith communities which were originally built for other purposes such as schools, theatres and cinemas, including the former **Ace Cinema in Harrow**, which is now the Zoroastrian Centre for Europe.
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- Protecting buildings through listing means people can worship in special historic buildings, helping to increase their sense of community. In a survey of worshippers at more than 60 listed places of worship in England, 88% agreed that their listed place of worship contributed towards community spirit.¹

Glossary

Faith community: A group of people who share the same faith tradition, and worship in the same place. In some faiths this community may be called a congregation.

Places of worship: Places of worship include churches, synagogues, gurdwaras, temples, mandirs, mosques and more. These can include historic buildings which have been adapted for use as places of worship.

The planning system: The use and development of all land and buildings in England are controlled by the planning system. This includes making major changes to existing buildings, as well as constructing new ones. This system ensures that the right development happens in the right place, at the right time.

¹ English Heritage and Living Stones (2010) 'Blessings or Burdens? Listed Places of Worship and their Role in Communities'

Contact your local Historic England office

North West: northwest@historicengland.org.uk

Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire & Merseyside

North East: northeast@historicengland.org.uk

County Durham, Newcastle, Northumberland, Tees Valley, Tyne and Wear

Yorkshire: yorkshire@historicengland.org.uk

East Riding of Yorkshire, Kingston upon Hull, North, South and West Yorkshire, York

East of England: eastofengland@historicengland.org.uk

Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk

South West: southwest@historicengland.org.uk

Bristol, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Isles of Scilly, Somerset, Wiltshire

Midlands: midlands@historicengland.org.uk

Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland

London & South East: londonseast@historicengland.org.uk

Greater London, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

Front cover: Kagyu Samye Dzong London Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Centre,
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Romanian română

Punjabi ਪੰਜਾਬੀ

Urdu اردو

Tamil தமிழ்

Malayalam മലയാളം



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