

THE
NATIONAL
GALLERY

BUILDING
CONSERVATION

BUILDING CONSERVATION April 2006

This policy addresses the main conservation issues which should be taken into account when considering any proposals to develop or alter the National Gallery building. As a grade 1 listed building, the National Gallery is a crucial part of the nation's heritage, deserving the highest respect. The Trustees and management of the Gallery have an obligation to ensure that its outstanding interest is maintained and, ideally, enhanced.

1. The Gallery has adopted a Conservation Plan listing the various parts of the building in terms of their architectural and historic significance. The Building department is responsible for the Plan, making sure that the development of all projects takes account of it, incorporating in it new information as it becomes available, and recording construction and other details which may be uncovered during the course of building works.
2. The Plan is kept up to date and its effectiveness is monitored. Significant changes to the policies contained in the Plan and summarised here are formally adopted by the Gallery's Board of Trustees, and submitted to the statutory authorities for comment.
3. At the inception stage for projects affecting the building fabric, a Heritage Risk Assessment is prepared, to assess the proposals in the light of the Conservation Plan taking into account the levels of significance and the policies contained in the Plan.
4. Any proposals to develop or alter the building should accord with Government Guidance on the historic environment, and with Local Authority Guidance for the area. Listed building consent must be obtained for any proposals which affect its historic and architectural character, and, as it is in a Conservation Area, proposals affecting its exterior must be assessed for their impact on other buildings, views and sight-lines within the Area.
5. Works to the building should have regard to its architectural and spatial character especially those areas defined in the Gallery's Conservation Plan as highly significant or significant.
6. Works should be carried out to a high standard of workmanship, as appropriate for a Grade I listed building, as the long term conservation of its character depends upon the maintenance of that quality.
7. There should be a presumption that existing fabric will be retained and repaired as appropriate according to best conservation practice. New materials used in repair should be compatible with the original materials.
8. A maintenance programme should be implemented, with resources earmarked for regular inspection and a programme of maintenance and repair, carried out by appropriately qualified personnel. Any proposals for refurbishment and re-use should allow for ease and safety of maintenance and cleaning of the building, in particular its roofs, gutters, down-pipes and windows.
9. Any cleaning of the fabric of the building, whether 'one-off' or as part of a regular cycle of maintenance, should be carried out using methods which will minimise damage to the many different materials of which the building is composed. Cleaning trials should be carried out by a specialist conservator to establish the most suitable technique to be applied.

10. Proposals for change of use to any part of the building should respect the public spaces and public circulation routes, and any major alterations to the building should respect the integrity of the main galleries and staircases.
11. Every effort should be made to maintain the principal architectural features of the main galleries, in a way that is compatible with the need to present the picture collection to the best effect. This should include preserving the consistency of their architectural finishes and fittings, especially their skirtings, cornices, door cases and floors, and following the same overall architectural language.
12. Surviving evidence of original services should be recorded prior to any new development or alterations, as their design and installation is an important part of the Gallery's history.
13. New services should, wherever possible, make use of existing service spaces, runs and outlets. Where this is not possible, the planning of new services should seek to minimise their impact on interior spaces and, externally (on the roofs for example) on significant views of and from the building.
14. Alterations or small-scale additions to the existing interiors should be assessed according to the significance of the areas affected. The presumption should be that there will generally be no major alterations in the areas defined as highly significant. Other alterations may be justified, especially to improve circulation and the visitor experience. These should be designed to be compatible with the architecture of adjoining areas, so as to achieve, as far as possible, a reconciliation between the significance of the building and the need to maintain its sustainable, long term use.
15. Any extension to the building will require the most careful justification against the criteria set by government and local authority guidance and must minimise impact upon the character and interest of the listed building. The aim should be to achieve a balance between the historic and architectural importance of the building and its viable long-term use.
16. Security and fire prevention and control measures should be designed to minimise their physical and visual impact on significant fabric and spaces, if need be by the adoption of specially engineered solutions.
17. The Gallery's disaster plan should take full account of the building's historic importance and the varying levels of significance of its different areas, so that, in the event of damage to the building, subsequent repair and reconstruction would be carried out in accordance with these.
18. In providing disabled access to the building, care should be taken to avoid adversely affecting highly significant or significant parts of the building.