



HISTORIC BUILDINGS

PRINCIPAL OF REPAIR

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planned routine management and maintenance is the foundation of good conservation. Regular inspection to check the condition of your historic asset and identify any repairs that may be needed is a good investment that can help prevent problems from escalating.
- 1.2 Even relatively minor repairs will have an impact on the significance of your historic asset, so it is important to make sure that they are designed to minimise harm. It is a good idea to understand the reasons why repair is needed, so that cause as well as symptom can be addressed. When designing repairs, the best conservation solution is likely to be the one that allows the maximum retention of significant original fabric.
- 1.3 With this in mind Flintshire County Council have developed a pilot repair grant scheme which will run for two financial years, after which time the benefits will be evaluated in terms of the potential to extend the scheme for future years.
- 1.4 The guiding principal that will be applied to grant assisted repairs will be to ensure that they restrain the process of decay without damaging the character of the building, altering the features that gave them their historic or architectural importance, or unnecessarily disturbing or destroying historic fabric.
- 1.5 This guide lists the broad principles that should be followed when contemplating the repair of historic buildings.
- 1.6 The principles listed here are sound, however, at the outset it must be emphasized that each specific case of repair must be considered on its merits.

2. KNOWING THE BUILDING

- 2.1 To repair old buildings well, they must be understood. An appreciation of a building's particular architectural qualities and a study of its construction, use and social and physical development are all enlightening. This information can also help to discover why decay sets in and how it may be put right.
- 2.2 Archaeological and architectural investigation may be required to assess the wider historic context of the building. Recording details of interest and the interpretation of the development of a building and its wider historic context may be required.

Recording should continue during the course of repairs and the Council should be notified of the method of recording and should be supplied with these records on request.

- 2.3 Repairs should invariably be preceded by a survey of the building's structural defects. This survey should include an investigation of the nature and condition of its materials and of the causes and processes of decay.

3. THE NEED FOR REPAIR

- 3.1 Repairs must be kept to the minimum required to stabilize and conserve buildings to achieve their long term survival and to meet the needs of an appropriate use.

4. REPAIR NOT RESTORATION

- 4.1 No building can withstand decay. Some important elements in the design of a building for example, balustrading, cornices, hood-moulding, window frames may have been lost in the past. Lost elements that are of structural significance should be replaced in repairs, however, the reinstatement of non-structural or decorative items should generally be avoided unless concrete evidence exists for accurate replacement.
- 4.2 No loss of historic fabric should result from restoration. Speculative replacement to 'restore' features of a supposed early date should be avoided. The authenticity of a historic building depends crucially on its design and on the integrity of its fabric. Unnecessary replacement will seriously reduce its value as a source of historic information.

5. TRADITIONAL REPAIR TECHNIQUES

- 5.1 Repairs should match existing construction techniques. Exceptions should only be considered where defects have been caused by inherent weakness in the existing method of construction. Old buildings are not the place to test unproven means of repair.
- 5.2 Repairs carried out in place, rather than on elements dismantled and moved to the workbench, help retain the quality of veracity and continuity in the building. When repairs are made, new material should always be fitted to the old and not the old adapted to accept the new. In this way more historic fabric can survive.
- 5.3 Repairs should, wherever possible, be reversible and should not preclude further treatment in the future. High quality and careful workmanship that respects the qualities and fabric of the building is essential. Good quality repairs should not be deliberately concealed neither should attempts be made to artificially age them.

Such repairs rarely succeed in concealment and often stand out as being out of place and 'fake'.

- 5.4 Bulging, bowing, sagging and leaning are all signs of age which deserve respect. Good repair should not aim to hide imperfections or create smart new look features. Age can confer a beauty of its own that should be sympathetically treated rather than eradicated.

6. MATCHING MATERIALS

- 6.1 The use of salvaged materials should be avoided as this confuses the understanding and appreciation of the building. The salvage trade also encourages the destruction and dismantling of old buildings. However, demand for the same materials now helps keep them in production.
- 6.2 Materials should match the existing element that is being repaired as a rule. The use of different but compatible materials can, on rare occasions be considered as an 'honest' alternative.

7. REMOVING LATER ALTERATIONS

- 7.1 Additions and alterations, including earlier repairs are important in telling of the cumulative history of the building. There will always be a strong presumption in favour of their retention. The full implications of removing even features of apparently no intrinsic value must be carefully considered in advance. Where features are removed, these should be recorded in situ.

8. REGULAR MAINTENANCE

- 8.1 Last but not least; regular maintenance is invariably the cheapest, most effective and practical method of preservation and avoids the need to carry out more intrusive and potentially costly repair at a later date.
- 8.2 The above principles are set out in relevant guidance from Cadw: '[Conservation Principles](#)'