

Records Management retention scheduling

1. Buildings records

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This guide is intended to supplement the general guidance on records management provided by The National Archives Information Management and Practice Department.
- 1.2 This guidance forms part of a series on retention scheduling published by The National Archives. A revision of guidance first published by the Public Record Office (PRO) in June 1996, it was prepared by the PRO and the Conservation Unit of English Heritage. While the criteria used are particularly relevant for historic buildings, the guidance covers all buildings on the Government Estate.
- 1.3 All records of construction and works processes, including plans and drawings, of government buildings are public records within the meaning of the [Public Records Act 1958](#). Where records are created by a private contractor in fulfilment of a contract that has been let by a government department or agency, these are also public records excepting those records relating to the internal administration of the contractor, for example personnel and wages records.

2 Background

- 2.1 In the past on the Civil Estate the majority of buildings records were created as a result of contracts let by the Property Services Agency (PSA) and its predecessors. These were deposited with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and stored at their records centre in Oxfordshire. They are appraised when their administrative value has elapsed (usually 16 years after the end of the contract).

Records relating to buildings on the Defence Estate have been deposited with the Ministry of Defence.

- 2.2 Since the privatisation of PSA, buildings contracts have been let by the government departments and agencies themselves. Many of the responsibilities previously exercised by Property Holdings have also been assumed by departments, following the setting up of the Property Advisers to the Civil Estate (PACE).

The records generated will become the responsibility of those departments and should be included in their appraisal programmes. Some departments may also have buildings records dating from the mid-1980s (before PSA privatisation) when they became 'untied' from PSA and were able to let their own contracts for building works.

3 Aims and objectives

- 3.1 The primary purpose of this guidance is to outline the methods by which building records can be maintained in a readily accessible form to ensure simple, economic and efficient use.
- 3.2 The long term practical value of building records sets them apart from other types of records. Whereas other records may be administratively useful for 10-20 years, some building records will be required for as long as the buildings exist. This can be hundreds of years.
- 3.3 Building records have not only historic but also great practical value. Much time and money can be wasted searching for or recreating relevant important information such as construction details, wiring and plumbing services, and colour schemes. Effective management of original material can avoid this.

- 3.4 A full record of a building's structure, plant and services is essential in order to plan accurately for its future care and to enable departments to fulfil their legal obligations and liabilities.

The maintenance of records is also essential to ensure that departments retain the evidence necessary to develop effective defences against unwarranted claims.

- 3.5 To ensure that buildings are cared for efficiently, economically and to the appropriate standards it is essential that appropriate records are maintained throughout a building's life.

The development of comprehensive collections of records is fundamental to the well-being of all buildings.

- 3.6 The government is committed to setting the highest possible standards in the care of its historic buildings estate.

Departments entrusted with the upkeep of these historic buildings are required to look after them expertly and sensitively. This commitment was set out in the Environmental White Paper This Common Inheritance (Cm 1200, 1990).

4 Types of records

- 4.1 Essentially government building records divide into three broad types:

- Legal Documents which include estate title, leasehold and other contract documentation relating to the building and its surrounding land
- Policy Records which include surveys, evaluation reports and policy studies
- Administrative Records which are particularly relevant to the maintenance, repair and reconstruction of buildings. They comprise information such as survey drawings, 'as built' drawings and records of services, historical narratives and descriptions, photographs, maintenance records, inventories of plant, equipment and furnishings, and possibly archaeological information about the site and building

5 Records creation

5.1 Document classification

It is essential to consider the potential long term value of documents at the time they are created. Time spent identifying and classifying records at this stage will reap benefits in the long term.

For example, it will enable the later process of appraisal to be accomplished efficiently and without the need to examine numerous files and papers in order to eliminate valueless records. The most effective way of achieving this aim is to compile a disposal schedule which lists and describes all buildings records and assigns retention periods to them. See [Disposal scheduling](#) for more information.

The model schedule appended to this guidance has been designed to help clarify the value of records being created.

Clearly mark records to be retained as part of the Building Records Centre (BRC) as such (see section 9). If the building is also a listed historic building or scheduled ancient monument, mark this clearly on the files and other papers.

5.2 Records status

5.2.1 Copyright in documents created in government departments is vested in the Comptroller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) at The National Archives on behalf of the Crown. Statutory provisions are covered by the [Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988](#).

5.2.2 Title deeds are not public records within the meaning of the Public Records Act 1958 but nonetheless they will form an important element of the Building Records Centre (see section 9).

5.2.3 Take due regard of a department's security needs in respect of buildings records and seek the advice of Departmental Security Officers. Take particular care in relation to records of buildings with a high security rating which are being managed in whole or in part by agents.

- 5.2.4 Departments contracting out projects and/or maintenance services to agents must ensure that the contracts contain clauses requiring the effective management of records, including the transfer of files and other records to the department at the termination of any contract.

In addition there must be adequate supervision of the records created by the agents. At the end of a project or maintenance contract the records must be transferred to the Departmental Record Officer (DRO) who will arrange for their appraisal in accordance with current disposal schedules or other review system prevailing in the department.

6 Records storage

- 6.1 Different patterns of records usage require different forms of storage. Cost will be a factor but records that need to be kept long term, such as those earmarked for the Building Records Centre (BRC), should be kept within certain temperature and relative humidity limits.

Those recommended for paper records are:

- temperature 13 C to 18 C
- relative humidity 45% to 65%

For electronic records the recommendations are:

- temperature 18 C to 24 C
- relative humidity 45% to 55%

7 Disposal schedules

- 7.1 As far as possible all government buildings records should be included on a disposal schedule. This should indicate records that are to be:

- destroyed after a specified period
- kept for First Review
- reviewed after a specified period (after the normal First Review period but before Second Review)

- kept for Second Review
- retained in the Building Records Centre (see section 9)
- permanently preserved in The National Archives

See the Appendix for a model disposal schedule.

7.2 You can find detailed guidance on the use of disposal schedules in [Disposal Scheduling](#).

7.3 Monitor schedules at regular intervals. The Departmental Record Officer (DRO) and Estates personnel should review them every year to ensure that retention and review periods are still realistic in the light of experience, that they remove records no longer existing from the schedule, and that they add new categories of record.

8 Reviewing records

8.1 Records not on Disposal Schedules

Where it is not possible to include records on disposal schedules, the project officer should assign a review date immediately on closure.

Consider related records which may have been included on disposal schedules and seek the advice of the Departmental Record Officer (DRO) and Estates personnel where any doubt exists.

8.2 Review Criteria

8.2.1 When assigning review dates bear two basic principles in mind:

- legal requirements - the implications of various legislation (for example, latent defects) will mean that certain records may have to be kept for up to 16 years
- administrative requirements - the potential value of records for the future when changes affecting the building are proposed or planned

8.2.2 You can seek additional advice on review from the Information Management and Practice Department at The National Archives or, in the case of historic buildings, from the [Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#).

8.2.3 Records which are likely to be of historical value and which may be preserved in The National Archives are:

- surveys
- project specifications, project reports, board minutes and board papers
- policy files
- planning and other certificates
- narratives or written accounts of historic buildings
- sets of 'as built' drawings
- photographic records of maintenance and building

You can seek further detailed information from the Information Management and Practice Department at The National Archives.

8.2.4 Records not selected by The National Archives or not suitable for inclusion in the Building Records Centre may be offered to other organisations, such as local record offices. Detailed guidance on the procedure to be followed in such cases is contained in the Manual of Records Administration.

8.2.5 Records of buildings on the Historic Buildings Register which are not selected for permanent preservation in The National Archives must not be destroyed without referring first to the Buildings, Monuments and Sites Division of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

9 Building Records Centre (BRC)

9.1 Departments should establish a Building Records Centre to house those records which have not been selected by The National Archives and which need to be retained to effect the continuing upkeep of buildings. The BRC will be a small part of existing records organisations.

9.2 Records which are likely to be of long term value for use in the care of buildings should be identified as soon as possible and marked 'BRC' (Building Records Centre). It is likely that the collection of records which will comprise the BRC will need to be retained by departments beyond the 30 year period normally allowed for public records before they

are selected for The National Archives or destroyed. This needs the approval of the Lord Chancellor under [s 3\(4\) of the Public Records Act 1958](#).

- 9.3 The Building Records Centre in a department should be kept separate from other records. Departments will find that the most appropriate location of their BRC will depend on the operational needs and general building estate disposition. The National Archives can assist departments in deciding on the location to suit their particular needs. Once established the BRC should become the primary location for the storage of all buildings records required for the care of the particular building(s).
- 9.4 The Building Records Centre should be the responsibility of the Departmental Record Officer (DRO) who will need to liaise closely with Estates personnel in their department. The DRO's duties in relation to the BRC should be to:
- ensure that the BRC is effectively managed
 - consult whenever appropriate Estates personnel and, in the case of historic buildings, the Buildings, Monuments and Sites Division of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport
 - provide a records production and replacement service to the department's estates and accommodation staff
 - monitor the creation of buildings records to ensure that relevant material is incorporated into the BRC
- 9.5 A catalogue or database of BRC records should be maintained so that both the department and The National Archives know exactly what has been retained and what may need to be reviewed in the future. This database might also include the location of records deposited elsewhere (such as The National Archives or local record offices).
- 9.6 Departments who employ the services of a managing agent or consultant to store all or part of their operational buildings records must ensure that an adequate data base is maintained. Suitable arrangements must be made in commissioning contracts so that records held by the agents are transferred at the end of the contract period to the department or to future agents for retention and appraisal.

9.7 A Building Records Centre will contain different types of records in different formats, including:

- original drawings
- files and folders
- computer records
- microform
- video tapes
- photographs

You can seek further advice on the storage and preservation of all types of records from The National Archives.

9.8 The following categories of records are likely to be retained in the Building Records Centre:

- project specifications. However, many projects or parts of projects are to standard PSA Specifications and copies of these do not need to be kept for all projects. The National Archives and the Library of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions have sets of such specifications.
- full sets of 'as-built' drawings
- certificates covering planning approval, compliance with building regulations, approval for historic buildings when appropriate, practical or substantive completion, and final completion
- test certificates electrical, gas, public health engineers, fire alarm, lift inspection, lifting equipment, hydraulic pressure and so on
- schedules for all items of building services equipment
- manuals for building maintenance, mechanical and electrical maintenance, manufacturers' instructions, and building users
- copies of commissioning results of all engineering services systems
- list of principal materials used in construction and catalogues of specialist components
- risk assessment reports
- list of any hazardous materials used in construction or services

- fire precautions documents including fire consultants' reports and recommendations, statements of compliance, schedule of fire appliances, and fire certificates
- copies of any relevant relaxation or dispensations from the Building Regulations agreed with the appropriate certifying authority
- any defect or failure reports raised during construction or commissioning
- copies of all guarantees on materials and workmanship
- copies of any defects lists appended together with the names of persons responsible for remedial work
- asset registers
- historical narratives, for buildings on the Historic Buildings Register

10 Further information

10.1 We have published other guidance on retention scheduling¹ and we are developing a series of records management standards which aim to promote good practice in the management of public records throughout all stages of their life cycle, including:

[File creation](#)

[Tracking records](#)

[Disposal scheduling](#)

10.2 We offer guidance on acquisition and appraisal such as:

[How to compile an appraisal report](#)

[The National Archives' appraisal policy](#)

[The National Archives acquisition and disposition strategy](#)

10.3 You can find guidance on access

- [Access to Public Records](#)
- [Data Protection](#)

¹ Listed under 'Retention' at nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/guidance/r.htm

10.4 Further information on these and other aspects of the management of public records is available at nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/ or from:

Information Management and Practice Department
 The National Archives
 Kew
 Richmond
 Surrey
 TW9 4DU

email: information.management@nationalarchives.gov.uk

telephone: +44 (0) 20 8876 3444

Appendix: Model Disposal Schedule

Agency..... Unit.....

Schedule Title.... Buildings Records: project documents Ref.....1/96

Item	Description	Transfer to store	Disposal
1	Specifications	Retain in BRC until five years after contract end	Review 25 years after contract end
2	Bills of quantity	Retain in BRC until five years after contract end	Review 16 years after compilation
3	Tender documents a) rejected b) accepted	a) two years after rejection b) at project completion	a) Review six years after date of final paper b) Review 16 years after project completion
4	Agreements with contractors and consultants	Two years after date of last paper	Review 16 years after date of final paper
5	Surveys and inspections a) reports – master set b) reports – other copies	a) two years after issue b) -	a) BRC b) Destroy two years after issue

6	Maintenance manuals	Retain in BRC	Destroy when no longer required
7	Standing instructions	Retain in BRC	Review two years after revision or cancellation
8	Final accounts	Two years after date of last paper	Review after 25 years
9	Client project board minutes and papers a) record set b) all other copies	a) two years after date of last paper b) -	a) Review 25 years after date of last paper b) Destroy 5 years after date of last paper
10	Tender and evaluation board papers	Retain in BRC until three years after contract end	Review seven years after contract end
11	Certificates (authorising payment)	Transfer to BRC after 16 years	Review 25 years after issue
12	Claim and arbitration files	Transfer to BRC after 16 years	Review 25 years after settlement

Signed.....**(DRO) Date**.....

Signed.....**(Estates) Date**.....

Agency..... **Unit**.....

Schedule Title.... Buildings Records: reports Ref.....2/96

Item	Description	Transfer to store	Disposal
1	Architectural master copy a) master copy b) other copies	a) retain in BRC b) -	a) Review 25 years after issue b) Destroy 5 years after issue
2	Structural engineering	Retain in BRC until superseded	Review 15 years after issue

3	Mechanical and electrical engineering	Retain in BRC until superseded	Review 15 years after issue
4	Drainage services	Retain in BRC until superseded	Review 15 years after issue
5	Building condition surveys	Retain in BRC	Review 25 years after issue
6	Quadrennial inspections	Retain in BRC	Review 25 years after issue
7	Fire precautions and services	Retain in BRC until superseded	Review 10 years after issue
8	Timber structures	Retain in BRC until superseded	Review 20 years after issue
9	Archaeological features	Retain in BRC	Review 25 years after issue
10	Financial and accounting	Retain in BRC for seven years	Review 12 years after issue
11	Asbestos inspections (compare: Control of Asbestos at Work (Amendment) Regulations 1992 SI 1992 No 3068)	Retain in BRC	Review 40 years after issue
12	Conservation (historic and listed buildings)	Retain in BRC	Review 25 years after issue
13	Other specialists reports not referred to above	Retain in BRC	Review 10 years after issue

Signed **(DRO) Date**

Signed **(Estates) Date**

Agency..... **Unit**.....

Schedule Title.... Buildings Records: maps, plans & drawings **Ref**.....3/96

Item	Description	Transfer to store	Disposal
1	Site surveys	Retain in BRC until 16 years after compilation or two years after new drawings compiled	Review 25 years after compilation
2	Measured surveys	Retain in BRC until 16 years after compilation or two years after new drawings compiled	Review 25 years after compilation
3	Archaeological records	Retain in BRC	Review 25 years after compilation
4	Design drawings	Retain in BRC	Review 25 years after compilation
5	Perspective drawings	Retain in BRC	Review 25 years after compilation
6	Working copies of above	Three years after superseded	Review 12 years after compilation
7	Consultants' and contractors' drawings and associated records	Two years after completion of project	Review 16 years after completion of project
8	'As built' or 'as installed' drawings	Retain in BRC	Review 15 years after settlement of contract
9	Presentation records, such as drawings, photographs or models	-	Review 15 years after completion of project
10	Competition drawings	Two years after result announced	Review 10 years after result announced
11	Feasibility studies, preliminary designs and other proposals not implemented	Two years after decision taken	Review 25 years after decision taken
12	Computer aided design (CAD) records	Retain in BRC	Contact The National Archives

Signed (DRO) Date

Signed(Estates) Date

Agency..... Unit.....

Schedule Title.... Buildings Records: maintenance records Ref....4/96

Item	Description	Transfer to store	Disposal
1	Maintenance schedules	Retain until superseded	Review 16 years after superseded
2	Maintenance diaries or logs	Two years after final entry	Destroy 16 years after final entry
3	Installation surveys (plant and services)	Retain in BRC until subsequent survey	Review 16 years after date of survey
4	Incident reports	Two years after action or if a claim is made, six years after claim is settled	Review 5 years after action or if a claim is made, six years after claim is settled
5	Maintenance programme	Retain until superseded	Review 16 years after superseded
6	Maintenance and operational manuals	Retain until equipment disposed of	When equipment disposed of, destroy or transfer to new owner
7	Health and safety inspection reports	Five years after issue	Review 12 years after issue
8	Accident books	One year after date of last entry	Review three years after date of last entry
9	Accident reports	Two years after completion of action	Review five years after action or if a claim is made, six years after claim is settled

10	Plant and equipment condition surveys	Retain in BRC until subsequent survey	Review ten years after date of survey
11	Maintenance contracts and related correspondence	Two years after end of contract	Review 12 years after end of contract
12	Meetings with contractors a) agenda, minutes (record set) b) agenda, minutes (other copies) c) drafts, domestic arrangements	a) Two years after meeting b) - c) -	a) Review five years after date of meeting b) Destroy six years after date of meeting c) Destroy three years after date of meeting
13	Forward maintenance registers (FMR)	Retain in BRC	Review 16 years after date of last entry
14	Asbestos registers (SI 1992, No 3068)	Retain in BRC	Review 40 years after last date of entry
15	Asbestos incidents - correspondence, reports and papers	Retain in BRC until 40 years after date of event	Review 30 years after date of event

Signed (DRO) Date

Signed(Estates) Date

Agency..... Unit.....

Schedule Title.... Buildings Records: legal documents Ref....5/96

Item	Description	Transfer to store	Disposal
1	Title deeds and other documents relating to freehold property *	Deposit in safe custody after completion	Transfer to new freeholder on disposal

2	Leases (signed copies)	Deposit in safe custody after completion	Destroy 16 years after expiry
3	Memoranda of terms	Deposit in safe custody after completion	Destroy 16 years after expiry
4	Subletting agreements	Deposit in safe custody after completion	Destroy 12 years after termination
5	Wayleave agreements	Deposit in safe custody after completion	Destroy 12 years after expiry or termination
6	Landlords' consents	Deposit in safe custody on issue	Destroy 16 years after surrender, expiry or termination of lease or memoranda of terms
7	Licences	Deposit in safe custody on issue	Destroy 16 years after surrender, expiry or termination of lease
*Not public records			
8	Schedules of known tenant alterations	Deposit in safe custody on issue	Destroy 16 years after surrender, expiry or termination of lease or memoranda of terms
9	Register of records and documents deposited in safe custody	Retain in BRC	Destroy 16 years after register ceases to be current
10	Tests and statutory certificates	Retain in BRC until expiry or superseded	Destroy 12 years after expiry or superseded
11	Fire certificates	Retain in BRC until expiry or superseded	Destroy 12 years after expiry or superseded
12	Planning consents and correspondence a) alterations to buildings b) new buildings	a) ten years after issue b) transfer to BRC five years after issue	a) Review 25 years after issue b) Review 25 years after issue

13	Listed buildings consents and correspondence	Transfer to BRC five years after issue	Review 25 years after issue
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Signed **(DRO) Date**

Signed **(Estates) Date**

Agency..... **Unit**.....

Schedule Title.... Buildings Records: correspondence, photos and miscellaneous **Ref**....6/96

Type	Item	Description	Transfer to store	Disposal
Correspondence	1	Consultants and contractors	Three years after date of last paper	Review 16 years after date of last paper
	2	Statutory authorities	Three years after date of last paper	Review 25 years after date of last paper
	3		Five years after date of last paper	Review 16 years after date of last paper
Photographic records	4		Five years after compilation	Review ten years after compilation
	5		Five years after compilation	Review 25 years after date of last entry
	6			
Miscellaneous	7	Publicity literature (such as ceremonial, official openings, dedications)	Immediately after event or publication	Review five years after event or publication

	8	Historical narratives	Retain in BRC	Review 25 years after issue
	9	Staff work diaries	Two years after date of last entry	Review five years after date of last entry
	10	Any other records relating to buildings not otherwise referred to in the schedules	-	Review five years after date of issue, closure or last action

Signed **(DRO) Date**

Signed..... **(Estates) Date**