

Appendix 4. What counts as ‘culturally significant’?

The literature points to two related issues:

1. Determining the elements of the heritage value that are fixed in the cultural increment.
2. Determining how we should grade such intangible value.

1. Elements of heritage value (English Heritage 1997)

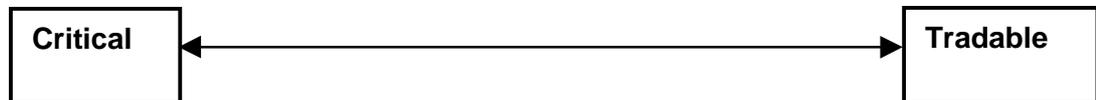
- Cultural values: the historic environment helps to define a sense of place and provides a context for everyday life. Its appreciation and conservation fosters distinctiveness at local, regional, and national level. It reflects the roots of our society and records its evolution.
- Educational and academic values: the historic environment is a major source of information about our ancestors, the evolution of their society and the characteristics of past environments. It provides a means for new generations to understand the past and their own culture. Through archaeology we can also learn about the long-term impact (and sustainability or otherwise) of past human activity and development, and this knowledge can inform current decisions.
- Economic values: the historic environment can make a significant contribution to economic development by encouraging tourism, income and employment.
- Resource values: longer-lived buildings usually make better use of the energy and resources that were used during their construction, and reuse is usually more economic than demolition and redevelopment. Conservation is inherently sustainable.
- Recreational values: the historic environment plays a significant role in providing for people’s recreation and enjoyment. Increasingly, the past and its remains in the present are a vital part of people’s everyday life and experience. [This aspect is covered by the other values (particularly economic and cultural). It should be put in the model for ‘double counting’ reasons].
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- Aesthetic values: archaeology and historic building make a major contribution to the aesthetic quality of townscapes and landscapes, enhancing the familiar scene of our historic towns and villages and giving historic depth and interest to our countryside. [Again, this is covered by the other categories.]

NB. Cultural features are invisible - therefore buildings tend to get listed for visible architectural reasons. Stephen Bond argues that any coherent analysis of an asset’s cultural profile (and value) go beyond the identification of visual features to incorporate such intangibles as ‘artistic merit’, ‘symbolic significance’, ‘commemorative’, ‘ecological’, etc.

2. Grading the value of the cultural increment

Following English Heritage (1997) 'historic environmental capital' can be classified thus:

Begin by locating position on the continuum



- Critical (extreme point)

Those elements of the historic environment that are considered to be of great value and irreplaceable, but which are vulnerable to damage or loss. These are the features which are regarded as being sacrosanct, and which we expect to be able to pass on virtually unchanged to our successors. Many of them will need special designation such as scheduling or listing to ensure their security.

- Tradable (extreme point)

Those elements of heritage value that society may be prepared to sacrifice in return for adequate benefits of other kinds. The trade-off might be in some other form of conservation gain but is likely to be connected to the asset's exchange, use or investment value. This might take the form of some proprietary interest of the owner (e.g. enhanced sale price, lower long-run maintenance costs, higher rental income, etc.), or some non-proprietary interest of the community (e.g. additional employment or adaptation to appropriate current use as housing, community facility, etc.).

Between these two extremes, and in practice encompassing both of them, lies the majority of the elements that comprise the fabric of the historic asset. These are usually termed "constant historic environmental capital" (ibid.1997). The element may be part of a wider or larger unit of capital, and it may be at the wider level that the desired "constancy" exists. In other words, it may be acceptable to replace or significantly alter an element so long as the bigger construct (or which it is a part) maintains its historic and cultural integrity.

Many element of the environment are important, not only for their individual value which will sometimes be recognised by special designation, but for their contribution to a larger group or whole which, again, will sometimes need to be marked by designation. For this, some changes may be sustainable if the overall character of the environment is maintained. (Ibid.p.7).