

# LISTED BUILDINGS BACKGROUND

## Nationally Listed Buildings

A nationally listed building is one that has been placed on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. It is a widely used status, applied to around half a million buildings in the UK. The statutory body maintaining the list in England is English Heritage on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. (English Heritage acts as the advisor to the Government on all matters relating to built heritage).

Listed buildings represent a finite resource and an irreplaceable asset. Therefore their protection, proper repair and sensitive alteration is of great importance. They are divided into three categories:

**Grade I** buildings are of exceptional interest, sometimes considered to be internationally important; only 2.5% of listed buildings are Grade I

**Grade II\*** are particularly important buildings of more than special interest; 5.5% of listed buildings are Grade II\*

**Grade II** are nationally important and of special interest; 92% of all listed buildings are in this class and it is the most likely grade of listing for a private residential building.

Most structures on the list are buildings, but other man-made “heritage assets” such as bridges, monuments, sculptures, war memorials, and even milestones and street furniture may also be listed. An entry can sometimes include more than one building – such as a terrace.

The older a building is, the more likely it is to be listed. All buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition are listed, as are most of those built between 1700 and 1840. The criteria become tighter with time, so that post-1945 buildings have to be exceptionally important to be listed. A building has normally to be over 30 years old to be eligible for listing. 15% of listed buildings were constructed before 1600.

In England there are approximately 374,081 listed building entries. Kent is home to some 18,400, more than in any other county. There are over 2,000 listed buildings in Sevenoaks District with about 200 in Sevenoaks itself, of which Knole House and the walls of Knole Garden are Grade 1.



## **Purpose**

As well as recognising a building's special architectural and historic interest, listing also brings it under the consideration of the planning system so that thought has to be given to its future. In planning law safeguards against unacceptable alterations, decay or even demolition mean that a strong measure of protection is provided. But listing is not a preservation order, preventing change; however it does mean that listed building consent must be applied for in order to make any changes to that building which might affect its special interest. The local planning authority must use such applications to make decisions that balance the site's historic and architectural significance against other issues such as its function, condition or viability.

Owners of listed buildings may in some circumstances be compelled to repair and maintain them and can face prosecution if they fail to do so or if they perform unauthorised alterations. When alterations are permitted, or when listed buildings are repaired or maintained, the owners are often required to use specific materials or techniques. Owners do have the right to appeal.

Listed buildings in danger of being lost through damage or decay in England are recorded in English Heritage's "Heritage at Risk" database, which includes all listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields, protected wreck sites and conservation areas. You can search The National Heritage List for England on-line to look for listed buildings in your area and print copies of individual entries. [English Heritage website](#).

## Historical Note

The creation of the statutory list was prompted by damage to buildings in World War II. Previously, only major ancient monuments had either State recognition or statutory protection. The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 codified the ad hoc processes developed during the war and created the first formal list of listed buildings.

Following a major public outcry at the demolition of the art deco Firestone Factory in 1980, the government instituted a major resurvey of buildings to ensure that nothing which merited preservation had been missed off the original lists. The mid- to late-80s saw the largest number of buildings added to the list, with over 36,000 being added in 1987 alone. By 1989 the process was largely complete, and subsequent years have seen fewer buildings added.

## Locally listed buildings

About half of local councils in England maintain a list of **locally listed buildings** as an addition to the statutory list. There are no statutory safeguards for a building on the local list but many receive a degree of protection from damage or loss through being in a Conservation Area and/or through local planning policy and practices. Schemes vary in practice.

These grades are used by Birmingham:

### Grade A

This is of statutory list quality. To be the subject of notification to English Heritage and/or the serving of a Building Preservation Notice if imminently threatened.

### Grade B

Important in the city wide architectural or local street scene context, warranting positive efforts to ensure retention.

### Grade C

Of significance in the local historical/vernacular context, including industrial archaeological features, and worthy of retention.

Crawley Borough Council judges buildings on five criteria: historic interest, architectural interest, group and townscape value, intactness and communal value.

## Heritage Plaque Schemes: Linking People to Places

There are many schemes around the UK whereby plaques are installed on a building - but although some may serve to denote the architectural or historic value of that building, the purpose of most is to commemorate notable historical people or significant local figures with a connection to it, or to highlight an important event associated with that building.



A Greater London Council blue plaque at Alexandra Palace, commemorating the launch of BBC Television there in 1936

The original Blue Plaque scheme was established in London by the Royal Society of Arts in 1866 and since 1986 has been run by English Heritage. There are currently some 880 plaques in the capital: the earliest to survive, from 1867, commemorates Napoleon III in King Street, St James's. Recent plaques include one to Beatles legends John Lennon and George Harrison.

The London scheme has been copied by numerous organisations in the UK and abroad: some schemes being run by local authorities, others by voluntary bodies such as civic, historical, arts, scientific and other societies.

More than 280 organisations have been running, or have proposed, plaque projects in England, and "Open Plaques" has recorded 8376 plaques to date in the UK. (Open Plaques is a community-based project that lists plaques that a) connect a specific location such as a building to people or events from the past, and b) commemorate notable buildings, due to their historic nature or the architect who designed them).

Such projects are expensive to maintain, and in January 2013 English Heritage announced that funding cuts meant that their London Blue Plaque scheme would temporarily close to new suggestions from the public (the principal source of recommendations). Plaques already approved will still be installed as planned and the organisation will seek new sources of finance, with, it hopes, a new scheme in place by 2014.

There are several schemes in **Kent**, such as those in Tunbridge Wells, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst. In Hawkhurst a Smugglers Trail has been devised to mark the days when the notorious Hawkhurst Gang of smugglers controlled much of the illicit trade along the south coast. The trail and plaques feature over twenty local hostelrys associated with smuggling from Hawkhurst, Goudhurst and Cranbrook down to the Sussex coast at Hastings and Rye.

The Historic Buildings Committee of CPRE Protect Kent, as part of its role of fostering the care, repair, preservation, recording and protection of historic buildings in the County, operates the 'Historic Buildings of Kent' plaque award scheme.

**In Sevenoaks**, several buildings in the historic Upper High Street have plaques issued by the Sevenoaks Society over the years. Some, with the emblematic Kent white horse, show that the building is listed. Others, on the Reeves House (Loch Fyne restaurant), the Red House railings, the Chantry and the almshouses, contain a brief description. The Society still considers requests for commemorative plaques, awarded on an exceptional basis.



HG Wells is remembered by the HG Wells Society blue plaque on 23 Eardley Road (Tusculum Villa) where he wrote much of "The Time Machine". (Speaking of himself and other lodgers there, he warned: *"People with lodgings to let in Sevenoaks ought to know the sort of people who might take them."*).



LITERARY GREAT: Blue plaque for H.G. Wells in Eardley Road

In addition Sevenoaks also has its own town heritage trail with embossed brass plaques set in the pavement as part of the Millennium Walk.



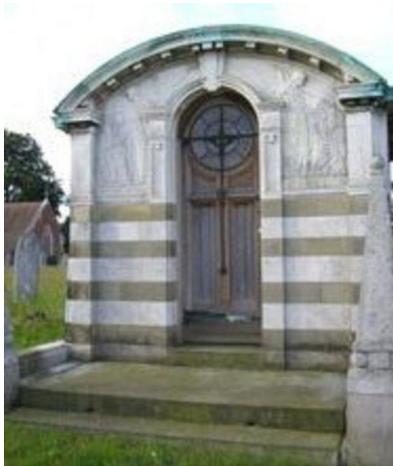
Surprisingly there are no CPRE plaques in the town, although Black Charles and High House in Underriver are commemorated as well as 11 other buildings in nearby villages.

## Modern Buildings

The Society's Frank Marshall Award for Townscape Improvement aims to give recognition to the best improvement or contribution to the townscape of Sevenoaks over the preceding two years. Candidates therefore will include notable new buildings, or alterations and extensions, that are of particular architectural merit and in keeping the character of the town. [Click here](#) for more information and details of the 2013 winners – who also received a Society plaque.

## Notable Buildings

As well as data from our Town Centre Surveys, the Society's web-site from time-to-time features buildings in the town that are of interest or importance for architectural, historical, social or other reason (including being the subject of or affected by planning applications or decisions).



The Grade II listed Kraftmeier Mausoleum in Greatness Cemetery.

This ornate mausoleum, built c. 1908 in Art Nouveau style, was commissioned by Edward Kraftmeier, a wealthy, well travelled merchant, and was first dedicated to Esme Kraftmeier who died aged twelve. Edward Kraftmeier was born in Germany and became a naturalised British citizen in 1892. The mausoleum was listed in 2003 and restored in 2011.