

Site Collections Development Policy

Name of Museum: English Heritage – Gainsborough Old Hall

Name of Governing Body: English Heritage Trust

Date on which this policy was approved by the Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals Committee: 17 March 2021

Policy review procedure: The Site Collections Development Policy is owned by the Senior Curator for the geographical area. It will be reviewed at least once every five years as part of a cyclical process managed through Registry.

Date at which this policy is due for review: March 2026

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Site Collections Development Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of the collections.

1. Management Arrangements and scope

- 1.1. This policy covers all the museum artefacts managed by English Heritage from, or associated with the site whether they are held on site, at another English Heritage site or store, or on loan to a third party. This policy does not cover artefacts associated with other English Heritage sites which are stored or displayed at this site.
- 1.2. The site and its collections form part of the National Collection of English Heritage.
- 1.3 Gainsborough Old Hall was gifted to the state in 1969 by the Trustees for Sir Edmund Bacon of Raveningham Hall, the then owner. Since acquisition the Old Hall has been managed by third parties under agreement with HMBC. Between 1969 and 1979 management was through a local group, the Friends of the Old Hall Association. From 1979 – Nov 2020 the property was leased and managed under formal agreement by Lincolnshire County Council.
- 1.4 Gainsborough Old Hall is located on the north side of the historic core of the town of Gainsborough. The Old Hall is a grade I listed building, list no 1359773 , grid reference: SK8133590011. The Old Hall stands within its own grounds bordered by Morley, Parnell, Gladstone and Cobham Streets (see appendix). The Hall had been scheduled in the mid-1920s but was de-scheduled (replaced by listing) in 1997. The grounds of the Hall were placed under covenant with the National Trust in 1937 by the owner, Hickman Becket Bacon.
- 1.5 Gainsborough Old Hall is in the West Lindsey District Council area in the County of Lincolnshire.

2. Relationships to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation

- 2.1. The national *Collections Development Policy* approved by the Board of Trustees on 9 November 2016, (together with any amendments to, or replacements for, the policy approved by Trustees), apply to the site. In the event of any disagreement between this site policy and the national policy the national policy will apply.
- 2.2. Without limitation to the above all the procedures, all ethical and legal considerations set out in the national policy apply to acquisitions, disposals and loans from or to the sites collection.
- 2.2. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

3. History of the collections

- 3.1. The history of the collections and collecting relating to Gainsborough Old Hall has occurred without input from HMBCE/English Heritage. Material associated with the building's history and its occupants and owners, along with material associated through mid-20th century social history displays has been collected, researched and documented by a number of different individuals and organisations. As far as can be ascertained collecting was, until the mid-1990s, undertaken without written development policies or established selection criteria.
- 3.2. Principle holders of collections relating to the Old Hall are:
 - The Bacon family: owners of the Hall until 1970;
 - The Friends of the Old Hall Association;
 - Lincolnshire County Council;
 - Gainsborough Public Library;Additional organizations likely to hold archive and artifacts may include:
 - The Gainsborough Masonic Lodge
 - The inheritors of the Literary, Scientific and Mechanics Institute records (currently unknown);
 - Gainsborough Heritage Society;
 - Private collections.
- 3.3. These bodies have collated assemblages covering family possessions, furniture and paintings; there are holdings of archive documents, prints, photographs and documents; there are items associated with later use of the Hall and archaeological assemblages from the pre-1997 scheduled area and within the listed building; there is a substantial assemblage of social history material relating to the town of Gainsborough and its wider area.
- 3.4. The scale of the Old Hall resource held by non-EH bodies, its significance and research/display potential, is only partially understood. There is no single listing of

all related material.

- 3.5 The Old Hall ceased to be the residence of the Hickman family in c. 1730. Over the next 200 years the building was leased and sub-let, being used as residence, workshop, civic amenity, theatre and Masonic Temple. Nothing remains at the hall that can be directly related to that later activity. By the late 19th century some furniture, paintings and other ephemera belonging to the family were present, placed on public display in the building. Whether these possessions had simply remained at the Hall since the family left, or been returned to adorn late 19th century civic institutions, is not known.
- 3.6 A museum was set up in the Hall by the Friends Association in 1949 – 1950. It is understood the family placed more of their possessions at the Hall in the long term care of the Association totaling, in 1950, over 100 items of furniture, a number of tapestries, embroidered vestments and christening gowns, and family and other portraits.
- 3.7 Between 1950 and c. 1965 the Friends Association actively collected items and archive of local social history material. This collection had little direct association with the building. When catalogued by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) the social history assemblage numbered almost 10,000 items. LCC now look after that assemblage.
- 3.8 The Lincolnshire County collection holds further archive and social history material relating to the building. LCC hold archaeological collections deriving from excavations from the 1980s onwards.
- 3.9 In November 2020 LCC enacted a break clause in their lease and the building reverted to direct management by English Heritage – the first time the state had directly managed its asset. At that point a series of fixtures and fittings, and ex-situ architectural items were brought into the EH collection.

4. An overview of existing collections

- 4.1 There are currently 52 items listed as permanent Collections Management System. The assemblage includes ex-situ carved architectural detail and historic fittings relating to the building such as fire backs.
- 4.2 47 items are held on loan from 2 lenders: a series of 15 paintings and 31 pieces of furniture from Sir Nicholas Bacon, and an Oak bed from Leeds Museum and Art gallery.

5. Themes and priorities for future collecting

- 5.1. Since its construction in the late 15th century the Old Hall has been the principle residence for a late medieval lordly household, the family home of a wealthy merchant family and residence to tenants ranging from an 18th century lord to the virtually destitute. The building has served as a factory, a theatre, preaching house and corn exchange; it has housed an Assembly room, Masonic Temple and Literary Institute, a public house, a tenement range and museum. The building has been altered, restored, stripped and refashioned. A long cast of characters

- have lived, worked and performed across its three ranges and numerous ancillary buildings.
- 5.2 Few of the Hall's interior spaces read as a single point in time or reflect a primary function. The surviving features of many chambers have been constructed across a number of centuries, and then aggressively re-defined in the late 20th century resulting in spaces that struggle to represent any particular history, or adequately convey the process of continual change. The Old Hall cannot easily be presented as a series of furnished historic interiors.
- 5.3 The Hall interiors are largely unheated, with poor compartmentalization and little buffering. As such they do not provide an environment generally suitable for the display of furniture and furnishings, paintings, prints or other sensitive object types. This further limits the scope for presenting the interiors.
- 5.4 Other institutions and individuals already have significant holdings associated with the Old Hall and we may be mindful of duplicating collecting areas or splitting related material across differing bodies.
- 5.5 Taking 5.1 – 5.4 into account our collecting policy for the Old Hall can be framed by the following principles:

- 5.5.1 Archaeology. English Heritage will respect LCC as the repository for archaeological material relating to the hall and its grounds.
- 5.5.2 Architecture and fittings. We will collect ex-situ material relating to the building if it adds to understanding, excepting where there is a reasonable prospect of re- instatement.
- 5.5.3 Furniture and furnishings. English Heritage would seek to collect items with a known association with the Hall on a case by case basis with reference to the following priority areas:
- Hickman family possessions likely to have been at the building between 1596 and c. 1730.
 - Material owned by 20th century residents of the East range apartment.
 - Items associated with the 19th century Assembly Rooms and Literary Institute.

We will not actively pursue historic furniture of a type with known items. It is not currently our intention, for example, to illustrate the 1625 probate inventory using non-associated material.

We are not currently aiming to collect in order to re-furnish, rather we will seek specific illustrative examples of period, occupation and function.

- Social history. Subject to discussion with other collecting bodies we would seek to collect social history material linked to the building, people and use. Our priority areas will be:
- Artifacts and archive relating to the Theatre, the Assembly Rooms and Literary Institute;
- Artifacts and archive relating to business occupation.
- Personal possessions of known residents and business owners. This will be extended to such as known performers, writers, administrators and users *if* said material helps to make a link

between them and the Hall.

- 5.5.6 Prints, paintings and photographs.
- In discussion with the Ravensingham Estate English Heritage would seek to acquire portraits of Old Hall owners and their immediate family members.
 - We would look to collect views of the Hall, as paintings, prints or photographs, subject to discussion with Lincolnshire County Council.
 - We will actively seek to acquire views of the Hall interiors pre-1952 and of people directly associated with the building to that date.
- 5.5.7 Books and manuscripts: We will look to acquire copies of antiquarian accounts of the Old Hall and its history. Specifically: Thomas Miller, 'This Old Town' (1857) and Adam Stark, 'Gainsburgh' (1817). We will also consider collecting books and manuscripts linked by ownership with the building, either as personal possessions or such as items belonging to the Literary Institute Library.
- 5.5.8 Oral History. We will actively seek to conduct oral history relating to 20th century use and protection. Target areas for oral history will be:
- The Friends Association: memories of the Association; works to the building 1949 to c. 1970; events held at the Hall; people related to the Association and the Hall.
 - Masonic Lodge: memories of the Masonic Temple up to 1952; stories relating to E. Dawber, Lodge member and resident caretaker at the Hall to c. 1965.
- 5.5.9 English Heritage does not seek to acquire the collection assembled by the Friends Association c. 1949 – 1965.

6. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

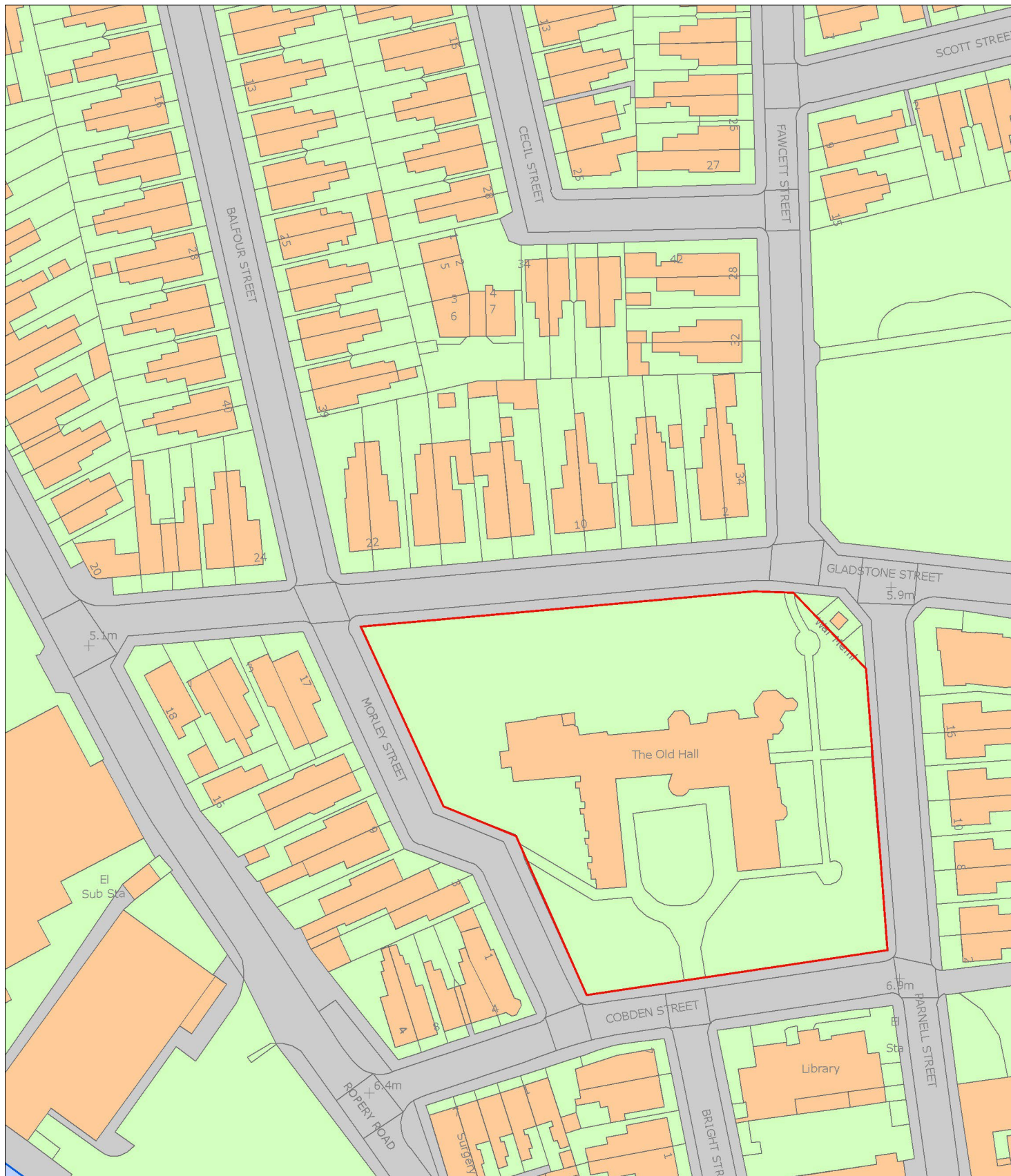
- 6.1. There are no plans for rationalization of the current assemblage.

7. Collecting policies of other museums, archives and individuals

- 7.1. English Heritage will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and archives, other organisations and individuals collecting in the same or related subject areas or fields. We will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
- 7.2. Specific reference is made to the following museums, archives and other bodies:
- 7.2.1 The Historic England Archives- with reference to archive material which includes plans and photographs of the site.
- 7.2.2 Lincolnshire County Council: referencing documentary and pictorial archive holdings, archaeological collections and material relating businesses and people associated with the building.

- 7.2.3 Ravensingham Hall Estate: would we work with the family to explore options for acquiring elements from their holding, as and if these become available.
- 7.2.4 Gainsborough Library: Liaise with over the acquisition of books and research archives relating to the Old Hall.
- 7.2.5 Gainsborough Heritage Society with regard to historic photographs, documents relating to business and amenities.

WebGIS Map



Appendix 1

Map showing Old Hall and extent of HMBCE land

Map Scale 1:1,077

Map Centre 481291,390047



Date

05/03/2021

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