

Records Management: Retention Scheduling

1. Buildings Records

Introduction

1.1 General guidance on records management is provided by the Public Record Office (PRO) Records Management Department and its Manual of Records Administration [Jan 1993]. The following is intended to supplement this general guidance.

1.2 This booklet is one of a series on Retention Scheduling published by the PRO Records Management Department. It has been prepared by the PRO and the Conservation Unit of English Heritage. It is a revision of the guidance published by the PRO in June 1996. 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, eg personnel and wages records.

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 have been 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 thus generated will therefore 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 (ie before PSA privatisation) when they became "untied" from PSA and were able to let their own contracts for building works.

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, which 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. This can be avoided by the effective management of original material.

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 therefore 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).

Types of records

4.1 Government building records are many and varied but essentially they divide into three broad types:-

4.1.1 Legal Documents

These include estate title, leasehold and other contract documentation relating to the building and its surrounding land.

4.1.2 Policy Records

These include surveys, evaluation reports, policy studies, etc.

4.1.3 Administrative Records

These documents are particularly relevant to the maintenance, repair and reconstruction of buildings. They form an essential element of the process of caring for 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.

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. It will, for example, 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. The model schedule appended to this guidance has been designed to help clarify the value of records being created. Further information on disposal scheduling can be obtained from the PRO's Manual of Records Administration and from the PRO Records Management Standard 5.1, Disposal Scheduling (1998). Records to be retained as part of the Building Records Centre (BRC) (see section 9) should be clearly marked as such. If the building is also a listed historic building or scheduled ancient monument, this should be clearly marked on the files and other papers.

5.2 Records Status

5.2.1 Copyright

Copyright in documents created in government departments is vested in the Comptroller of HMSO on behalf of the Crown. Statutory provisions are covered by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

5.2.2 Deeds

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 Security

Due regard must be taken of a department's security needs in respect of buildings records and the advice of Departmental Security Officers should be sought. Particular care needs to be taken 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 Managing Agents

Departments who contract out projects and/or maintenance services to agents need to 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 that are 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.

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%

6.2 Further information on the storage of all types of records can be obtained from the Records Management Department (RMD) of the Public Record Office.

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 Public Record Office

A model disposal schedule is appended to this guidance.

7.2 Detailed guidance on the use of disposal schedules is contained in the PRO's Manual of Records Administration and in the PRO Records Management Standard 5.1, Disposal Scheduling (1998).

7.3 Schedules must be monitored at regular intervals and preferably reviewed every year by the Departmental Record Officer (DRO) and Estates personnel to ensure that retention and review periods are still realistic in the light of experience, that records no longer existing are removed from the schedule, and that new categories of records are added.

Reviewing Records

8.1 Records not on Disposal Schedules

Where it is not possible to include records on disposal schedules, they should be assigned a review date immediately on closure by the project officer who is most closely conversant with the matter to which the records relate. Regard must be taken of related records which may have been included on disposal schedules and the advice of the Departmental Record Officer (DRO) and Estates personnel should be sought where any doubt exists.

8.2 Review Criteria

8.2.1 When assigning review dates two basic principles must be borne in mind:

- legal requirements - the implications of various legislation (eg 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 maintenance, repair, alteration, refurbishment, etc of the building is proposed or planned

8.2.2 Additional advice on review may be obtained from the PRO Client Managers or, in the case of historic buildings, from the Buildings, Monuments and Sites Division of 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 Public Record Office are:-

- surveys
- project specifications
- project 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
- project reports

Further detailed information on such records can be obtained from the PRO Manual of Records Administration and from PRO Client Managers.

8.2.4 Records not selected by the PRO or not suitable for inclusion in the Building Records Centre may be offered to other organisations, such as local record offices, the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (RCHME) or its Welsh equivalent the RCAHMW, or local history collections. Detailed guidance on the procedure to be followed in such cases is contained in the PRO Manual of Records Administration.

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

Building Records Centre (BRC)

9.1 Departments should establish a Building Records Centre to house those records which have not been selected by the PRO 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 PRO or destroyed. This will require the approval of the Lord Chancellor under section 3(4) of the Public Records Act 1958. Detailed guidance on the procedures to be followed is given in the PRO Manual of Records Administration.

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 PRO 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 his/her department.

The DRO's duties in relation to the BRC should be:-

- to ensure that the BRC is effectively managed
- to 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.
- to provide a records production and replacement service to the department's estates and accommodation staff
- to 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 PRO 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 (eg PRO 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

Advice on the storage and preservation of all types of records is available from the Public Record Office.

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

- project specifications
It should be noted, however, that 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 PRO 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, etc
- 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

Other Publications and Further Information

10.1 In the same series as this booklet the Public Record Office (PRO) has also published guidance on retention scheduling for personnel records, accounting records, health and safety records, and contractual records. More such booklets are planned in future years.

10.2 The PRO is currently working on 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. Those published so far are:

- RMS 1.1 [File Creation](#)
- RMS 2.1 [Tracking Records](#)
- RMS 3.1 [Storage of Semi-Current Records](#)
- RMS 5.1 [Disposal Scheduling](#)

10.3 In the area of electronic records a major publication, *The Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records*, was issued in March 1999. This is in two volumes covering principles and procedures. More booklets will follow in this series.

10.4 Guidance on acquisition and appraisal is the subject of another series of publications. The first two booklets in this series cover *Planning of Records Appraisal* and the PRO's *Acquisition and Disposition Policies*.

10.5 A fifth series covers information policy and so far includes:

- Access to Public Records
- The Data Protection Act 1998: A Guide for Records Managers and Archivists

10.6 Further information on these and on other aspects of the management of public records can be obtained from:

Records Management Department
 Public Record Office
 Kew
 Richmond
 Surrey
 TW9 4DU

Tel: 020 8876 3444

Fax: 020 8392 5283

email: records-management@nationalarchives.gov.uk 

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 5 years after contract end	Review 25 years after contract end
2	Bills of quantity	As above	Review 16 years after compilation
3	Tender documents: a) rejected b) accepted	2 years after rejection At project completion	Review 6 years after date of final paper Review 16 years after project completion
4	Agreements with contractors and consultants	2 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	2 years after issue -	BRC Destroy 2 years after

			issue
6	Maintenance manuals	Retain in BRC	Destroy when no longer required
7	Standing instructions	Retain in BRC	Review 2 years after revision or cancellation
8	Final accounts	2 years after date of last paper	Review after 25 years
9	Client Project Board minutes and papers a) record set b) all other copies	2 years after date of last paper -	Review 25 years after date of last paper Destroy 5 years after date of last paper
10	Tender and evaluation board papers	Retain in BRC until 3 years after contract end	Review 7 years after contract end
11	Certificates (authorising payment)	Transfer to BRC after 16 years	Review 25 years after issue
12	Claim and arbitration files	As for 11 above	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 a) Master copy b) Other copies	Retain in BRC -	Review 25 years after issue 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 7 years	Review 12 years after issue
11	Asbestos inspections (cf 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 specialist 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 2 years after new drawings compiled	Review 25 years after compilation
2	Measured surveys	Retain in BRC, until 16 years after compilation or 2 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	Destroy 25 years after compilation
6	Working copies of above	3 years after superseded	Destroy 12 years after compilation
7	Consultants' and contractors' drawings and associated records	2 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, including drawings, photographs, models, etc	-	Review 15 years after completion of project
10	Competition drawings	2 years after result announced	Review 10 years after result announced
11	Feasibility studies, preliminary designs and other proposals not implemented	2 years after decision taken	Review 25 years after decision taken
12	Computer Aided Design (CAD) records	Retain in BRC	*

Signed **(DRO) Date**

Signed**(Estates) Date**

* see PRO guidance *Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records* (1999)

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	2 years after final entry	Destroy 16 years after final entry
3	Installation surveys (plant and services)	Retain in BRC until subsequent survey	Review 16 after date of survey
4	Incident reports	2 years after action or, if a claim is made, 6 years after claim settled	Review 5 years after action or, if a claim is made, 6 years after claim 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	5 years after issue	Review 12 years after issue
8	Accident books	1 year after date of last entry	Review 3 years after date of last entry
9	Accident reports	2 years after completion of action	Review 5 years after action or, if a claim is made, 6 years after claim settled
10	Plant and equipment condition surveys	Retain in BRC until subsequent survey	Review 10 years after date of survey
11	Maintenance contracts and related correspondence	2 years after end of contract	Review 12 years after end of contract
12	Meetings with contractors a) agenda, minutes etc, record set b) agenda, minutes etc, other copies c) drafts. domestic	2 years after meeting - -	Review 5 years after date of meeting Destroy 6 years after date of meeting Destroy 3 years after date of

	arrangements etc		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 date of last 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 after completion	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	10 years after issue Transfer to BRC 5 years after issue	Review 25 years after issue Review 25 years after issue
13	Listed buildings consents and correspondence	Transfer to BRC 5 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

Item	Description	Transfer to Store	Disposal
Correspondence			
1	Consultants and contractors	3 years after date of last paper	Review 16 years after date of last paper
2	Statutory authorities	3 years after date of last paper	Review 25 years after date of last paper
3	Utility and communication companies	5 years after date of last paper	Review 16 years after date of last paper
Photographic records			
4	Albums	5 years after compilation	Review 10 years after compilation
5	Catalogues of photographs	5 years after compilation	Review 25 years after date of last entry
6	Prints and negatives a) site photographs b) work in progress	3 years after event 3 years after project 3 years after project	Review 10 years after project or event Review 16 years after project or event Review 25 years after

	c) completed works	2 years after event	years after project or event
	d) publicity photographs		Review 25 years after project or event
Miscellaneous			
7	Publicity literature (ceremonial, official openings, dedications, etc)	Immediately after event or publication	Review 5 years after event or publication
8	Historical narratives	Retain in BRC	Review 25 years after issue
9	Staff work diaries	2 years after date of last entry	Review 5 years after date of last entry
10	Any other records relating to buildings not otherwise referred to in the schedules	-	Review 5 years after date of issue, closure or last action

Signed (DRO) Date

Signed..... (Estates) Date