

## Policy on Preservation and Conservation 2025-2030



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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Mission Statement

Preservation and conservation are at the heart of the Service mission statement:

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service's priority is to ensure the proper management of Worcestershire's heritage for current and future generations. **We protect, preserve, manage, record, interpret, share and promote the history and historic environment of Worcestershire.** We help the modern county of Worcestershire to achieve its priorities as identified in the Corporate Plan; Open for Business, Promoting Health and Well Being, Protecting the Environment, Supporting Children and Families. We are developing a sustainable model for the continuance and growth of the Archive and Archaeology Service in the current financial climate.

## 1.2 Standards and Principles of Remedial Conservation

Conservation work is undertaken by a qualified conservator within a purpose-built studio at The Hive. All work is undertaken to the highest ethical standards with the aim of having minimal impact on the authenticity of the document. Conservation is carried out using accepted techniques and materials that have been shown by research to be

chemically and physically stable. All items are photographed and documented before treatment. Details of the original condition and treatment undertaken are recorded in the Conservation database. Where possible, this information is linked at item level to the relevant CALM entry.

Conservation will consist of the minimum necessary treatment to the archives in order to stabilise them, prolong their life, and render them fit to be used, without compromising their integrity.

Details of remedial conservation are outlined in the Collections Care and Conservation Plan

Standards followed: Archive storage at The Hive has been built (2012) to BS5454:2000 standards and conforms to PD5454:2012. It follows guidance now contained in PAS 198:2012. Conservation technique follows BS497: 2017 'Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections'.

## 2.0 History

Basic conservation and repair was carried out in the early days of the Worcestershire Record Office but since local government reorganisation in 1998 no on-site conservation facilities were available. Such conservation needs as there were, were fulfilled through external contracting and consultancy, while in-house attention turned more to preservation and improving packaging.

As a result of the creation of the Hive, a Conservation Studio was scoped and a specification produced that would include a considerable range of equipment and material to provide a fully functioning Conservation workshop for paper, parchment, book and other document repair. A Conservator began work in December 2012 as an established member of staff, able to also undertake external commissions.

## 3.0 Terms of Deposit for Acquisitions

Material is accepted into the archive in a variety of formats and may include handwritten or typescript primary sources, maps, plans, designs, drawings, photographs, printed material, audio-visual, born-digital and electronic media of any date.

At the point of deposit and accessioning an assessment of the physical condition of the deposit is recorded. Collections are checked for damp,

mould, insect infestation and the presence of potentially damaging material such as rusty pins and plastic folders in a specially designated reception room. Appropriate action is taken before items are placed in archival boxes and packaged as necessary.

Worcestershire Archive Service will not normally accept:

- Potentially hazardous material such as cellulose nitrate film or infested material that would pose a risk to the repository or other collections
- Archives damaged beyond repair, unless the continuing historic value is judged to be significant
- Records of a particularly specialist nature requiring skills or equipment beyond our resources to preserve, exploit or interpret or for which there is a more suitable repository

Worcestershire Archive Service reserves the right to adopt preservation policies including migration to ensure the readability and long-term preservation of the information contained in electronic media. Details relating to electronic media can be found in the Digital Preservation Policy.

Records deposited on loan are subject to the terms of deposit, while records deposited as gifts become the property of the county council.

Certain expectations and terms apply to those records which are held on loan, from external bodies, authorities, and private persons concerning the extent of cataloguing and conservation treatment they may receive.

## **4.0 Preservation and Conservation Aims:**

### **4.1 Storage of Archival Materials**

Items are stored following the recommendations of BS 5454:2000 in one of seven purpose-built strong rooms which contain mobile and static shelving. Photographs, glass negatives and other audio-visual material are stored in a designated strong room. Items are re-shelved as soon as possible after use. Locations are clearly indicated by shelf and bay numbers within storage areas and in a computerised locations database. A programme of cleaning documents and enhancing secondary packaging within specific collections is being undertaken by volunteers under supervision of the Conservator.

### **4.2 Handling of Archive Material**

Staff are trained in correct handling techniques for documents in the care of Worcestershire Archives. Trolleys are provided for the health and safety of staff, and to prevent items from being damaged by being dropped or unnecessary handling during transportation of items from storage to access areas. Book supports and appropriate light weights are



supplied for use by searchers, and staff are available to give advice on their correct use.

New staff are given induction in procedures and policies of the Service, including handling of archives. New researchers are given induction before being asked to sign to confirm their understanding of the rules and being able to use the public searchroom.

Items are handled carefully during the cataloguing process with supports used as necessary. Items in need of conservation are recorded on the CALM database. Appropriate secondary packaging is used where necessary and all items are stored in acid-free archive boxes in a strongroom suitable for the particular material.

We aim to provide access wherever possible but if an item is considered 'at risk' or 'too fragile to be handled' by the Conservator or another member of staff, this item will be withheld from public consultation and will not be issued. Where possible, we aim to record information on CALM if an item is 'Not for General Issue.'

## 4.3 Archive Security

Onsite security is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by Bellrock. Security guards are responsible for the overall security of the building

during open and closed hours. Frequent patrols of the building are undertaken. Security control the entry of contractors and deliveries to the building. There is CCTV coverage throughout the interior and exterior of the building. Security maintains, tests and actively monitors the CCTV system and Intruder Alarm system and responds when necessary.

Public access to original documents is limited to a designated area which is closely supervised by staff and where Searchroom Rules, inter alia, prevent the use of pens or presence of food and liquids. Lockers are provided for items that are not permitted in the searchroom. Access to storage areas is restricted, by the use of security swipe cards, to archive staff. Documents are only produced in the searchroom or for exhibition in accordance with the standard document request procedure.

Searchroom users must present an Archive Card and sign in on the searchroom register to gain access to the secure area where archives are produced.

Worcestershire Archives Service will be entitled in their absolute discretion, in respect of records deposited on loan to:

- Photograph, microfilm or otherwise copy, the ownership of copyright in all such copies to be vested in the Council
- Number them with finding references for identification and safe-keeping

- Carry out such conservation work as may be considered desirable and practicable by the Service
- Withhold them from public access if in a fragile condition or whose condition could be worsened by public use until all practicable and necessary treatment has been carried out

## 4.4 Environmental Monitoring

Strongrooms have been designed to conform to BS5454:2000 and are controlled and monitored through the Building Management System by Bellrock Facilities Management at The Hive. There are separate monitors for humidity and temperature readings in each strong room.

Environmental units are set to provide a temperature range of 16-18° and relative humidity at 50% ( $\pm$  5%). Room 60, storing specialist media, has a set temperature range of 11-13° with a relative humidity bandwidth of 35-45%. There are no sources of natural light in the repository areas.

Repository lighting is operated manually on entry and exit to the area to minimise light exposure in these areas.

Temperature and humidity levels within each strongroom are monitored and recorded with the aim of providing a stable storage environment and regular reports provided to the County and Diocesan Archivist and Conservator.

An Integrated Pest Management programme is in operation in which insect blunder traps are scheduled for replacement every three months, with the contents being monitored and recorded. Remedial action will be taken if considered appropriate. The Facilities Management contractor employs a pest control specialist to carry out regular inspections of the entire Hive site and to resolve and problems as and when necessary.

## 4.5 Disaster Planning

Worcestershire Archives will maintain, develop and regularly update an Archives Disaster Plan, in conjunction with the Service Review Team at The Hive and the County Council Corporate Information Governance Team. A supply of disaster recovery equipment and materials are maintained within the Conservation studio. A small freezer is available for use in the event of a minor disaster. We have an annual contract to receive the Harwell Drying Restoration Priority User Service. In the event of a large-scale disaster, Harwell will be called out to assist with the salvage and recovery process.

## 4.6 Surrogates

The preservation of records includes a consideration of the use of surrogates and provision of alternative versions of the record. We target heavily used items and 'at risk' material for digitisation to prevent further deterioration caused by handling. The public are expected to use

surrogate copies where available to reduce the physical handling of material.

## **4.7 Exhibition Facilities**

Original archives are only to be on display in secure cases which are environmentally sound and meet requirements for exhibition in BS4971:2017. They will, in any event, not normally be on display for more than three months. Conservator ensures that all original material is in a suitable condition to be displayed and adequately supported for the duration of the exhibition. Items on permanent display have a selection of bespoke display stands to ensure they are fully supported. For other display cases in The Hive or as part of WAAS outreach, facsimiles will usually be used.

## **5.0 Prioritisation of Preservation and Conservation work**

### **5.1 Priorities**

Conservation work will not normally be carried out on records deposited on loan without the agreement of the depositor, which may include a financial contribution. Worcestershire Archives will prioritise those records needing conservation which have intrinsic value or special needs or provide suitable training opportunities for staff development. On

undertaking such work priority will be given to stabilising damage; detailed conservation work will be reserved for records of exceptional historic, symbolic or physical interest or value, and for records required for exhibition and outreach purposes.

Where necessary, preventive conservation measures based on scientifically tested treatments will be undertaken to protect and preserve records. Conservation treatments will use sympathetic materials and will be restricted to the minimum necessary to stabilise an item and make it fit for use or digitisation. Treatment will not be concealed and will be reversible to maintain the integrity of the repaired document. All treatments will be fully documented, and where possible linked to the CALM entry for the item.

## 5.2 Costs

In the terms of deposit of records held on loan the expectation is that while the period of custody by the County Council may be unspecified, the records shall remain deposited in the council custody for a period sufficient to justify any expenditure on them by the Council on storing, cataloguing and conserving them, which in normal circumstances would be for a minimum of 50 years.

If material is withdrawn from such custody permanently, costs may be charged to cover storage, cataloguing and conservation of the records concerned.

## 5.3 Funding for Preservation

Dedicated funds are available for preservation, allowing items to be stored in acid-free boxes, folders and other housing. Items are stored within packaging of appropriate format and size. The Service commits to store and care for records deposited on loan in conditions no less favourable than those which apply to its own organisational records.

Opportunities will be taken, where appropriate, to seek external funding either as part of a wider project or purely on the basis of individual items of work, to progress further conservation of archives.

## 6.0 Review

This policy was written in January 2025 and will be reviewed in January 2030 or earlier if circumstances dictate.

This plan should be read in conjunction with other related Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service policies and accompanying documents including:

- Collection Care and Conservation Plan
- Acquisition and Collection Development Policy

- Appraisal Guidance
- Digital Preservation Policy
- Policy on Preservation and Conservation
- Collections Information Policy and Plan



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