

Collections Development Plan 2025-2030



Contents

Collections Development Plan 2025-2030	0
1.0 Mission Statement.....	1
2.0 Introduction.....	1
3.0 Aims.....	2
4.0 Acquisition	3
5.0 Appraisal and review of existing collections	4
5.1 Disposal of records.....	6
6.0 Collections Development Monitoring	6
7.0 Annual review and surveying of collections	7
7.1 Surveys for the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978	9
8.0 'Rescue Archives'	10
9.0 Collecting Priorities 2025-2029	12
10.0 Born-digital records.....	15
11.0 Review	16
Contact Us:.....	17
Find us on social media:.....	17

1.0 Mission Statement

At Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS), our 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 striving to develop a sustainable model for the continuance and growth of the Archive and Archaeology Service in the current financial climate.

2.0 Introduction

Worcestershire Archive Service seeks to identify, collect and preserve the documentary heritage of Worcestershire and make it available for use both now and in the future and to encourage the broadest public access to archives. In fulfilling these duties, we will abide by all relevant legislation including:

- Public Records Acts 1958, 1967
- Manorial Documents Rules 1959 and 1967
- Tithe Apportionment Rules 1960 and 1963

- Local Government (Records) Act 1962
- Local Government Act 1972
- Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, amended 1992
- Local Government (Access to Information Act) 1985
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

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

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

3.0 Aims

This plan outlines the steps Worcestershire Archive Service will take to deliver our Acquisition and Collection Policy. We will endeavour to take steps to address any gaps in our current collections and to strengthen collection areas as identified through our established monitoring processes.

Worcestershire's diverse communities and their activities, past and present. We will collect records from whatever source can contribute to a better understanding of the history and development of the County. In order to ensure our holdings represent a complete as possible coverage of Worcestershire's past, the Archive Service will seek further collections that record all aspects of life in the area we serve, aiming to cover all parts of the county's past and present and as wide a range of institutions and subjects as possible.

Our collecting priorities are constantly evolving in order to reflect the continuing development of our collections. Whilst priority for acquisition of records will be given to archives at risk of loss, destruction or damage; we will actively endeavour to acquire record collections that are perceived as currently underrepresented within the Service's holdings.

4.0 Acquisition

Worcestershire Archive Service collects material that fulfils one or more of the following criteria:

- Records of the County Council and its predecessor bodies
- Records of other local authorities and their predecessors and statutory bodies operating within the County
- Local public records held under the Public Records Acts
- Ecclesiastical records of the Diocese of Worcester
- Records of regional bodies which have their headquarters within the County, except where provision has already been made with another repository
- All types of record-creating bodies within the county of Worcestershire, such as Faith groups other than the Church of England, clubs, societies and associations, businesses, families, including landed estates and individuals.

5.0 Appraisal and review of existing collections

In order to ensure that the collections of records acquired by Worcestershire Archive Service are fully in line with the conditions of our Acquisition and Collection Policy a process of appraisal and review takes place, whereby all records are assessed for their research value and for

the suitability of Worcestershire as their long-term repository. Appraisal takes place at three points within the accessioning process:

- By the depositor prior to accessioning by Worcestershire Archive Service. Whilst this is not an enforced process it is something that the service strongly encourages our existing and potential depositors to carry out. Specific advice on reviewing and appraising parish and town council records; ecclesiastical records and school records can be found on our website.
- By Worcestershire Archive Service prior to accepting collections into our care. Preliminary sorting and appraisal is carried out as part of the accessioning process, particularly where it is evident that this has not been carried out by the depositor.
- By trained Worcestershire Archive Service staff during the sorting and listing stage that is carried out prior to cataloguing collections.

Records contained within a collection must adhere fully to the terms specified within the Acquisition and Collection Policy; specifically, that records collected must relate to the history of Worcestershire, or the Diocese of Worcester, and its administration. Any appraisal activity that is found to be necessary is carried out in accordance with Worcestershire Archive Service's guidance for appraisal of collections.

Where appraisal of a collection identifies a section of records that do not adhere to the Acquisition and Collection Policy and the removal of such records would threaten the integrity of the wider collection, the appropriate action to be taken is to be decided at the discretion of the County and Diocesan Archivist.

5.1 Disposal of records

Archive collections are appraised by Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service in accordance with our in-house appraisal guidance. If, during the appraisal process, records are encountered that do not adhere to the conditions specified within the Acquisition and Collection Policy or are deemed to be unworthy of permanent preservation then they may be returned to the depositor, transferred to a more appropriate repository or destroyed confidentially.

All disposal actions are carried out in accordance with the wishes of the depositor, as specified on the accessioning paperwork that is completed at the point of deposit.

6.0 Collections Development Monitoring

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service carries out routine monitoring collections in order that we may better understand where gaps in our collections may lie. By obtaining an understanding of areas that are currently underrepresented in our collections, we can, where possible, endeavour to actively prioritise collecting activities for areas we are seeking to address. This occurs alongside a continuous process of monitoring during the processing of existing collections, as specified in our Collections Information Policy and Plan.

7.0 Annual review and surveying of collections

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service takes part in The National Archives' Annual Accessions to Repositories Survey, which collates information about the accessions made to the office over the preceding 12 months. The information that the Service submits each year is used in conjunction with the results of our previous survey of collections to annually assess our holdings.

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service carries out a continuous programme of reviewing and surveying of its collections to ensure that we maintain an up-to-date overview and understanding of our holdings.

We are mindful that many of the contents of the larger collections that are currently placed on our backlog of accessions, which are awaiting full sorting and cataloguing, are still unknown to us. For this reason, we carry out continuous monitoring during the processing of existing collections. Further details of our procedures for dealing with records held on our backlog can be found in our Collections Information Policy and Plan documents. The cataloguing activity of staff within the Service is assigned and closely monitored by our archivists in order that we maintain an accurate picture of the records we hold. Should our staff come across any records during the sorting, listing and cataloguing of documents that directly affect our collections development work, then this information is recorded and passed on to the appropriate staff member in order that amendments may be made where appropriate.

The information that is gathered through our sorting and cataloguing activity and through the statistics compiled for the Annual Accessions to Repositories Survey is monitored and then used to feed into collections development activities for the ensuing years. We create our Collection Development plans on a five-yearly basis. We maintain the right to review this document prior to its published end date should we find that our collecting priorities are dramatically altered as a result of deposits made or records discovered through the course of cataloguing during this period.

7.1 Surveys for the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978

In accordance with the Parochial Registers and Records Measure of 1978 Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service has been designated by the Bishop of Worcester as the Diocesan Record Office for the Diocese of Worcester. In accordance with the Measure we are the designated repository for the deposit of parochial registers and other records.

The Parochial Registers and Records Measure of 1978 (amended as to 2003) stipulates that "Every archdeacon shall cause the register books and records in parochial custody in his archdeaconry, including register books in use for the purpose of making entries therein, to be inspected and reported on periodically by such person or persons as he may appoint."¹Traditionally this role has been carried out by Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service. The Measure also states that the survey must be carried out every five years. Whilst we do not have the resources available to carry out a full survey every five years, we do maintain regular contact with the parishes within Worcester Diocese. Wherever frequent contact is not maintained we will seek to initiate a parochial survey in line with the five-year guideline.

¹ 1 Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 No.2, F4 – 9, (1)

The aim of conducting the surveys is to ensure the long-term preservation and accessibility of parochial registers and records as a reflection of the heritage of the Diocese. By compiling lists of the records held and assessing the conditions in which they are kept, recommendations and advice can then be given as to the best course of action for different records, to ensure their long-term preservation and accessibility. Ensuring the security of these records both prior to their deposit and throughout the duration of our custody of the records is a high priority Collections Development task for the Archive Service.

8.0 'Rescue Archives'

Given limited resources and capacity there is a risk of archives being lost to posterity. On occasions where the Service is made aware of the need for urgent intervention to protect or rescue archives, there may be insufficient capacity to deal with all the appropriate and expected accessioning and cataloguing that would normally be associated with a deposit of records. The situation warrants their rescue in order to protect the heritage for the future and the potential for more considered interventions when resources allow.

Examples of situations could be that a local company or organisation closes down overnight; a key individual in an organisation, such as the

secretary, dies or leaves the area; an organisation realises that their storage of historic records in the bathroom or by a radiator needs rectifying.

As a result of such rescue operations, Collections Development will include an ad hoc element which may take the Services' collections into new and underdeveloped sectors, proving beneficial in the longer term to the development of policy at the same time as preserving important archive material.

In practice, archives rescued would be given an accession number, a brief appraisal of extent, details of the organisation and future contacts. It would need to be checked before being stored in the strongrooms but the nature of intervention would be minimal and there would be a presumption against any public access until resources permitted a more detailed appraisal of the collection. It would be sufficient for the public to be aware that the material existed and had been rescued and at some point, to be arranged it could be made more accessible.

The key principle here is about protection of the archival heritage and not its accessibility.

The notion of rescuing archives in this way is not new. Rescue Archaeology is a long tradition, and the Institute of Advanced Legal

Studies (University of London) and The National Archive's campaign on legal records at risk is a similar approach. Securing the heritage, including archives, of areas of the world at risk from war and other danger is another example of this principle, though one admittedly more extreme than what is proposed here in Worcestershire.

9.0 Collecting Priorities 2025-2029

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service works within its capacity to serve our current stakeholders and those we do not currently reach or represent.

We endeavour to add further collections ensure our holdings are inclusive and relevant and that they support and reflect all our communities, helping us to both document the present and interpret the past from new perspectives. Development of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service collections ultimately comes from true engagement with communities and the cultivating of relationships. Creative partnerships help people to recognise the impact of archives and will inspire new generations of depositors.

Archive staff within Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service seek to develop our coverage through a programme of active collection and community engagement. With support from our Outreach team, we will

work with community groups and other partners representing Worcestershire's communities to apply for funding opportunities to cultivate such relationships. We will be led by the communities that engage with us and the prevailing sentiment of the time. In doing so we actively contribute to the aims of Worcestershire County Council's Corporate Plan.

The Local Government reorganisation is potentially due to commence from the year 2026 with the aims of making financial savings in local government administration. We will aim within our resources to take advantage of opportunities this brings for collection development. We will endeavour to do this by proactively working with the current Worcestershire County Council's Corporate Information Governance Team and the current District and Borough councils, to identify records for permanent preservation. Our aim is to ensure records that reflect the activities of our communities are not overlooked and are instead enhance our archival holdings.

The outcome of our retro conversion project is to bring hard-copy inventories of our archival holdings in line with current cataloguing standards and make them more widely discoverable to researchers by adding them to our online searchable catalogue. Publicity updates during this project will allow us to engage with a much wider range of potential researchers to communicate messages covering the breadth, useability

and safekeeping of our current holdings. We will also use the publicity as an opportunity to engage with the general public as future potential depositors, in due course broadening the breadth of collections held by the Service.

As part of the cataloguing process Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology will continue to explore opportunities to revisit existing holdings with a view to identify records that demonstrate the relevance of our collections through project communications and promotion, thereby attracting interest from new potential depositors and cultivating new relationships within communities.

In support of prevailing sentiment through time, we will continue to promote archival material during annual awareness campaigns with the aim of providing a sense of belonging through archives we hold. We will do this through our social media platforms, in exhibition displays and events online and in-person.

In addition to Worcestershire County Council mandatory training. We will continue to support staff participation in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training, best practice, and professional development to inform our work with Worcestershire's diverse communities as potential depositors, project partners and researchers.

We will also continue to visit local schools as part of Outreach activities and capitalize on Worcestershire County Council's partnership in The Hive building with the University of Worcester and other nearby Local Authorities.

10.0 Born-digital records

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service has a Digital Preservation Policy, which outlines our intentions and strategy for handling born-digital material and all digital surrogates in our care. The Service has also prepared a Digital Asset Register internally, which ensures that we have an accurate picture of the materials we hold and will allow us to progress with our plans for the preservation, cataloguing and access to digital assets.

Our focus for the duration of this Collection Development Plan is to meet the requirements for care of digital records, using NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation as outlined in our Digital Preservation Policy. The Service will also strive to create awareness amongst existing and potential depositors of the importance of managing, retaining and depositing born-digital material. We will continue to develop and review information documents outlining the steps required for dealing with digital material, along with practical templates for compiling and submitting essential metadata and associated information. Digital material deposited with the

Service will be subject to the criteria for collecting records outlined in our Acquisition and Collection Policy and Preserving Digital Records Guidance for Depositors.

11.0 Review

This Policy was reviewed January 2025 and will be reviewed again January 2030 or earlier if circumstances dictate.

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