



Historic England

# Law and Government Buildings

Listing Selection Guide



# Summary

Historic England's twenty listing selection guides help to define which historic buildings are likely to meet the relevant tests for national designation and be included on the National Heritage List for England. Listing has been in place since 1947 and operates under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. If a building is felt to meet the necessary standards, it is added to the List. This decision is taken by the Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). These selection guides were originally produced by English Heritage in 2011: slightly revised versions are now being published by its successor body, Historic England.

The DCMS' *Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings* set out the over-arching criteria of special architectural or historic interest required for listing and the guides provide more detail of relevant considerations for determining such interest for particular building types. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-of-selection-for-listing-buildings>.

Each guide falls into two halves. The first defines the types of structures included in it, before going on to give a brisk overview of their characteristics and how these developed through time, with notice of the main architects and representative examples of buildings. The second half of the guide sets out the particular tests in terms of its architectural or historic interest a building has to meet if it is to be listed. A select bibliography gives suggestions for further reading.

This guide covers national and local civic buildings. They include central government buildings, shire and town halls, law courts, and police and fire stations, all of which were built in large numbers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the role of the state expanded along with the complexity of public administration. Many are architecturally ambitious, and were designed to project pride in public service provision. Prisons are also treated here because of their obvious functional links with policing and the legal system, and so too stocks and whipping posts.

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## Front cover

Lancaster Shire Hall, part of a court and prison complex to the designs of Thomas Harrison, inserted

from 1786-99 into Lancaster Castle (listed Grade I and a Scheduled Monument)

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# Introduction

This selection guide covers civic buildings at a local and a national level. They include central government buildings, shire and town halls, law courts, and police and fire stations, all of which were built in large numbers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the role of the state expanded. Many are architecturally ambitious and were designed to project pride in public service provision, with considerable resources being devoted to their construction. In their size and planning they reflect the growing complexity of public administration, and their ubiquity provides a constant reminder of the role of elected local authorities in the life of the nation. They can thus possess considerable community value, and play key roles in our townscape. Sometimes the various functions (law courts, assembly

rooms, concert halls, administrative quarters) were combined in a single structure or alternatively separately housed but perhaps grouped together to form a municipal enclave. Government ministries are few in number, but include some important public structures. Prisons are grouped here because of their obvious functional links with policing and the legal system, and so too stocks and whipping posts.

Museums and public libraries are covered separately under the [Culture and Entertainment Buildings](#) selection guide, while municipal sporting facilities are considered in the [Sports and Recreation Buildings](#) selection guide.



# 1 Historical Summary

## 1.1 Town Halls

The town hall in the modern sense of the term, as a centre of local government combining civic and administrative functions, is largely a creation of the nineteenth century. Buildings serving the same function have been called by a variety of other names including guild hall, shire hall, vestry hall, moot hall, municipal offices, and civic centre; all are included in this section.

With the exception of London, no medieval English town possessed a town or guild hall on the scale of those of Italy, the Low Countries or Northern Germany. English town halls were small (Fig 1), often sharing accommodation with guilds, law courts and, more frequently, markets. The classic form – a first-floor meeting room for town officials, raised on arcades, incorporating an open-sided market hall on the ground floor often on an island site – was remarkably long-lived.



**Figure 1**

This modest town hall, now used as a museum, in Corfe, Dorset, was clearly rebuilt in 1774 with an extra storey for a new Council Chamber. The small scale of

much civil administration is all too easily overlooked. Listed Grade II\*.



**Figure 2**  
 The Town Hall of 1754-60 in Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, also housed a gaol. It has a commanding presence standing, as was common, in the middle of the road. Its classical design by S and J Worrell has more than a passing resemblance to James Gibbs's famous church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London. Listed Grade I.

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Examples range from Thaxted, Essex, 1390-1410 (listed Grade I), to Kingston-upon-Thames in south-west London, 1838-40 (listed Grade II\*). Until the Municipal Corporations Reform Act (1835), boroughs (sometimes organised as formally constituted corporations) were private bodies that existed for the benefit of their members rather than the community at large. Their income was derived from property and levies on goods and transactions. Early modern examples such as Abingdon, Oxfordshire (by Christopher Kempster, 1678-80; listed Grade I), reveal how medieval approaches were brought up to date and given appropriate quarters for the growing responsibilities carried out by local bodies.

During the eighteenth century increasing architectural elaboration was given to town and guildhalls, which closely reflected the growth in municipal self-awareness and urban identity (Fig 2). County halls reflect the growing parallel growth in county-based institutions. Local government, the administration of law, and the growing organisation of local society all combined to produce buildings of note, such as Worcester's Guildhall (Thomas White, 1721-3; listed Grade I) or the Shire Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (John Johnson, 1789-91; listed Grade II\*). These became key features in the Georgian town.

The role of the town hall changed markedly in the nineteenth century. At first it was primarily concerned with public events – large assembly rooms for civic occasions and concerts for large audiences, with a council chamber and mayor's suite: the classical temple of Birmingham (Hanson and Welch, 1831-35; listed Grade I; Fig 3) is a grandiose example. The apogee of the early Victorian municipal building, combining the law court and concert hall functions found in some earlier town halls, was Liverpool's spectacularly neo-classical St George's Hall. This was, and is, renowned for its complex multi-functional planning and architectural richness, forming part of an outstanding ensemble of civic buildings further enhanced by fine sculptures (H L Elmes, from 1841; listed Grade I). These new forms of civic monument reflected the emergence of new self-identities in economically vibrant cities: economic prosperity and municipal aggrandisement often went hand-in-hand.

In 1835 the Municipal Corporations Reform Act re-shaped the administration and accountability of 178 incorporated boroughs, but did not touch many of the growing industrial towns that remained unincorporated and lagged behind in terms of local administration. The impact of the Act was gradual. Legislation, especially from the 1870s, strengthened municipal powers and eased their ability to raise finance: by 1869 Manchester could afford to spend £1,000,000 on its town hall by Alfred Waterhouse (listed Grade I). Public hall, council chamber and mayoral suites all required an appropriately grand access route;





**Figure 3**

In an area of central Birmingham now dominated by grand civic buildings of a later date, Joseph Hansom's

dignified town hall of 1831-35 still commands respect. Listed Grade I.

office accommodation might be tucked in around these spaces but required separate entrances and its circulation had to work efficiently. In smaller towns, the required functions might be distributed around a single building but in larger towns additions and extensions were often required, or even rebuilding on a bigger site. The expansion of civic responsibilities, which gradually necessitated a variety of design professionals and the management of services, contributed to this development. Whereas a borough in 1840 may have had four departments, by 1902 it may well have had thirteen (including schools, housing, rates, highways, trading standards, hygiene, burials, building control). All these had to be accommodated. Scale inevitably increased too along with municipal ambition, resulting in the palatial complexes of northern England such as Leeds Town Hall (Cuthbert Broderick, 1853-58;

listed Grade I). These are high points of Victorian public architecture.

London had a particularly complex municipal structure. Its fragmented administration was reformed in 1855 with the creation of the first truly important London-wide planning authority, the Metropolitan Board of Works, and a lower tier of vestries and district boards of works which emerged from the medieval parish network. These occupied modest vestry halls, for instance the former St Mary Newington Vestry Hall, Lambeth (1864-65; listed Grade II), and board offices such as the former Strand District Board of Works Offices, Tavistock Street, Westminster (G F Fry, 1857; listed Grade II). As certain vestries achieved greater civic consciousness, a series of more ambitious vestry halls emerged as in Shoreditch (C A Long, 1866-67; listed Grade II), Chelsea (J M Brydon, 1885-87;

listed Grade II\*) and Battersea (E W Mountford, 1892-93; listed Grade II\*). Further reforms in 1889 established a new authority for the capital, the London County Council, housed in Ralph Knott's Thames-side County Hall (begun in 1912; listed Grade II\*) which appropriately reflected the weight of its responsibilities in its monumentality. The lower tier of authorities was reorganised in 1900, producing 28 new metropolitan boroughs and initiating a new phase of town hall construction; many, such as Deptford, in the London Borough of Lewisham (1901-05 by Lanchester, Stewart and Rickards; listed Grade II), were designed with great panache, befitting strongly held local pride and a keenly felt awareness of history and tradition.

Nationally, a new tier of government at county level, the County Council, was created under the Local Government Act (1888). This resulted in some purpose-built county halls, executed in a range of styles across the architectural gamut of this eclectic age. More imposing examples include the Art-Nouveau/Italianate West Riding County Hall, Wakefield, West Yorkshire (Gibson and Russell, 1892-94; listed Grade I); the French-influenced Surrey County Hall, Kingston-upon-Thames (C H Howell 1892-93; listed Grade II) and, in a modern manner, the Scandinavian inspired Hertfordshire County Hall in Hertford (J Bywaters and R Pierce, 1935-39; listed Grade II\*).

In 1894 further municipal reform led to the formation of Urban District Councils, serving small towns and suburban areas, and Rural District Councils, administering groups of rural parishes. The purpose-built 'council offices' that resulted were often scaled-down versions of their inner-city counterparts, as in Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire (H.C. Scaping, 1904; listed Grade II) and Crewe, Staffordshire (1902-05 by H T Hare), both in the Baroque style. A domestic neo-Georgian style was also popular: Barnet, Hertfordshire (H Cheers, 1914-15; listed Grade II) is one example, displaying a restrained dignity which befitted the public face of these emergent local authorities. Many, as at Dudley in the West Midlands, were subsequently enriched by war memorials, placed adjacent to or within the civic buildings.

Mid-twentieth-century municipal buildings could still be impressive in scale (for instance, Vincent Harris' Bristol Council House of 1935-52; listed Grade II\*) and richly appointed in key areas, with mural painting and decorative sculpture playing significant roles. The narrative of historical development was important for civic identity. Continental architectural influences were also evident in the asymmetry and brick expanses of town halls, such as Reginald Uren's at Hornsey, in the London Borough of Haringey, of 1933-35 (listed Grade II\*). A new term, civic centre, emerged in the inter-war period for complexes which combined council offices with other public buildings, as in one of the earliest, E Berry Webber's Southampton Civic Centre of 1929-39 (listed Grade II\*). Post-war municipal buildings could be traditional in style such as Donald McMorran's Devon County Hall of 1957-64 in Exeter (listed Grade II\*); others, such as Charles B Pearson and Son's North Lincolnshire Civic Centre at Scunthorpe of 1960-62 (listed Grade II), Jellicoe, Ballantyne and Coleridge's Plymouth Civic Centre of 1958-62 (listed Grade II) and G W Kenyon's Newcastle-upon-Tyne Civic Centre of 1956-65 (listed Grade II\*) were deliberately modern in their use of open planning, subtle spatial effects and interesting materials and artefacts. Since the 1970s the building of such municipal complexes has almost ceased, the consequence of a changing political climate and latterly financial pressures, while a number of existing civic buildings have passed out of government ownership

In summary, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, municipal image equalled architectural grandeur; in the post-war period, town halls became less formal, and more accessible and low-key, but often remained buildings of note.

## 1.2 Government buildings

The origins of central government premises lie in the royal households. Bespoke quarters were only provided from the eighteenth century onwards: William Kent's Treasury Block on Horseguards Parade in Whitehall of 1733-37 (listed Grade I)



is among the earliest. Most significant was Sir William Chambers' Somerset House, on the Strand (listed Grade I): very much a product of the Enlightenment, it was begun in 1776 and consisted of a multi-functional quadrangle housing numerous government departments as well as learned societies. It can thus be seen as the earliest government office building (see also the [Commerce and Exchange Buildings](#) selection guide). Its combination of outward show and inward ingenuity of planning, combining opulent public spaces and more restrained working areas, set the tone for the subsequent development of the type. From the mid-eighteenth century government buildings were concentrated very much around one street in central London: Whitehall. Individual private houses were at first adapted for government use: from the late Georgian period onwards, specific designs were produced to serve instead. Unlike the palatial structures built in India to house the civil servants of the Raj, these were at first rather self-effacing, as with Soane and Barry's work on the Old Treasury building (listed Grade I), which emulated a terrace of houses. Later government buildings were far more ambitious, and the summit of public architecture in the mid-nineteenth century was attained with the construction of the Palace of Westminster (Sir Charles Barry with A W N Pugin, 1840-60; listed Grade I). Sir George Gilbert Scott's Foreign Office (1862-75; listed Grade I) embodied High Victorian confidence on a fittingly imperial scale, combining sophisticated planning with outward grandeur in a classical Renaissance manner. Later government buildings opted for a Baroque grandeur which conveyed the solemnity of public administration and London's status as the capital of an empire (a message sometimes underscored by allegorical sculpture). J M Brydon's New Government Offices on Whitehall (1899-1915; listed Grade II\*) represents this trend. Monumental government buildings continued into the mid twentieth century: Vincent Harris's Ministry of Defence building (1939-59; listed Grade I) marks the close of the tradition, and the erosion of the former emphasis on decoration and lavish public areas, towards a more austere epoch of government accommodation. Some prestigious government buildings in the heart of Whitehall

have been designed to a high specification by leading architects, such as Whitfield Partners' Richmond House (1983-86) and Sir Michael Hopkins' Portcullis House (1998-2001). Outside London, other government buildings have tended to occupy speculative office premises, frequently designed with fairly short life-spans in mind.

### 1.3 Law courts

The history of law court buildings is of increasingly complex legal processes requiring ever-more complex accommodation, well articulated in the design of G E Street's Royal Courts of Justice (1874-82) on London's Strand (listed Grade I). Often, legal process took place alongside (or even within) municipal buildings, and in early periods within religious or military buildings, or even inns. However, the architectural vocabulary of the modern court, at least from the eighteenth century onwards, attempts to convey function combined with a sense of state authority and civic pride. The principal consideration in their layout is the separation of different, and sometimes opposing, categories of participants in the legal process. In criminal cases the dock, bench and jury box are at the heart of proceedings and dominate the space. In civil cases, where a just settlement rather than an assignment of guilt is the aim, the two opposing parties may each have a stand from which to put forward their evidence.

#### Criminal courts

Before the creation of the Crown Court in 1972, the majority of serious criminal cases were dealt with by Borough and County Quarter Sessions while the most serious offences were heard at the itinerant Assizes. The Assizes also sat as a civil court. Buildings that housed the Assizes would have one courtroom for criminal cases, the *Crown Court*, and another for civil cases, the *Nisi Prius* court (meaning 'unless before': this term refers to the county courts in which cases are initially heard by a judge, 'unless before' then it has been heard at Westminster). In Carlisle the two functions are each given separate buildings in an overall design by Sir Robert Smirke (1810-11; listed Grade I).



**Figure 4 (top)**

The western of two oval towers flanking the south entrance to Carlisle and forming the city's Court House. By Sir Robert Smirke, 1810-11, they are to a design originally by Thomas Telford. The eastern tower housed the civil court, and the western (above), the criminal court. Listed Grade I.

**Figure 5 (bottom)**

Standing in the shadow of a castle – a not infrequent location for courts – York's refined classical Court House of 1773-77, designed by John Carr, externally resembles a fine country house. However, its equally impressive interior is organised to provide cells to the basement, two double-height court rooms lit by glass domes, a High Sherriff's room, and grand entrance hall. Listed Grade I.



Originally, the Assizes were held in great halls in royal castles, while the Quarter Sessions were usually held in town halls, the only buildings with a large room capable of housing courts. As the room also had to perform a variety of functions, the furnishings of the court were portable. By the eighteenth century a new type of building evolved with courtrooms attached to a large hall. This allowed the twin functions that had previously been exercised in a single hall to be conducted separately, with courtrooms situated behind an entrance hall (as at Worcester Guildhall 1721-24; listed Grade I), the earliest of this new type of building) or at either end (as in John Carr's York Assize Courts, 1773-77; listed Grade I). Lancaster Castle (listed Grade I and a Scheduled Monument) is an outstanding survival of an eighteenth-century court and prison complex being inserted into a noted medieval royal stronghold, to the designs of Thomas Harrison, from 1786-99. The Gothick interiors of the court are among the country's finest in this category.

Planning became increasingly complex during the nineteenth century and the formalisation of legal processes led to the fixing of courtroom furniture to create a permanent space for trials. The separation of courthouse users became more sharply defined. That might begin at the boundary of the law court site, or once inside the main entrance. The courtroom, at the heart of the courthouse, was where each circulation route converged, each category of participant arriving from the section of the building they were permitted to occupy. Assize courtrooms were designed to accommodate large numbers of participants, each category in its own, pew-like, wooden seating areas. Seating usually faced the raised bench or was at ninety degrees to it, although in some courts a curved arrangement was employed. The double-height of courtrooms allowed for rear and side galleries and enabled the courtrooms to be lit from above and by lights high in exterior walls. Criminal courts had a central dock, often connected to the cells below. Civil courts had a pair of opposing stands for the plaintiff and defendant. Both types of court had quite complex circulation patterns: sometimes there were three separate entrances and suites for judge, officials and public.



**Figure 6**

Now converted to a theatre, this former Sessions House and police station of 1824 in Spilsby, Lincolnshire, by H E Kendall employs the powerful Greek Doric order for its gigantic portico to convey the authority of the law. Listed Grade II.

The modernisation of local government provided opportunities to combine civic and court accommodation. This might result in a single court, such as at Devizes, Wiltshire, designed by T H Wyatt in 1835 (listed Grade II\*), or a number of courtrooms and ancillary accommodation around a central, multi-functional hall as at Leeds Town Hall (1853-58; listed Grade I). Purpose-built Assize and Quarter Sessions courthouses, with little or no local government function, became more common from the nineteenth century (Fig 6). The largest, such as Birmingham's Victoria Law Courts (1887-91; listed Grade I), also included Petty Sessions Courts and a Coroner's Court. The design of law courts evolved to adjust to these new arrangements, and their outward grandeur could be considerable. Few display the solemnity of justice as powerfully as London's Central Criminal Courts (better known as The Old Bailey; listed Grade II\*), rebuilt in 1907 by E W Mountford, embellished with symbolic sculpture and bearing the words 'Defend the Children of the Poor & Punish the Wrongdoer'.



The Courts Act of 1971 abolished the Assizes and the Quarter Sessions and replaced them with the Crown Court. Former Assize and Quarter Sessions Court buildings became Crown Courts, Magistrates' Courts, or were made redundant. The earliest dedicated Crown Courts did not open until the early 1980s. By the 1990s Combined Court Centres were becoming a popular format, combining civil and criminal courts into a single judicial structure in a major city. Further reform of the organisation and premises of law courts is expected.

### Summary justice (Magistrates' Court)

Prior to the establishment of the Magistrates' Court in 1949, summary criminal courts were known as Police Courts or Petty Sessions Courts. The modern Magistrate has evolved from the medieval Justice of the Peace. The role of justices originally included some local government administration as well as criminal and civil law responsibilities. Formerly, Justices of the Peace held local 'Petty Sessions' in whatever appropriate accommodation was to hand, including their own homes, town halls, inns or workhouses. Occasionally a 'Justice Room' with a separate entrance will be found in a Victorian country house. Existing rooms in inns were fitted up for the sessions with moveable furniture and in some cases rooms were built for the express purpose of holding Petty Sessions. A rare survival is the Black Bull Inn in Birstall (West Yorkshire; listed Grade II) which has a first-floor former courtroom containing panelled boxes for the magistrate and defendant, decorated with symbolic paintings. Petty Sessions continued to be held in inns until around the 1880s.

Increasingly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, JPs came to share accommodation with the police, establishing a distinct building type (see Police Stations below), but the 1949 Justices of the Peace Act separated summary justice from policing. Consequently, the Magistrates' Court became a distinct civic building type in its own right even where it continued to share the same site as the police station. In Derbyshire, the Chesterfield Court House (1963-65, by J S Allen and Roy Keenleyside; listed Grade II) shows the type at its most imaginative.

### County courts

These were established in 1846 to provide a unified national system for small debt recovery at local courthouses or other buildings. Earlier types of court, such as the Courts of Request or Courts of Conscience, of which there were several hundred all over the country, did not have a uniform constitution and jurisdiction. Surviving purpose-built Courts of Requests are extremely rare. The best example is in Queen Street, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire (listed Grade II). From 1846 until their abolition in 1870, responsibility for county court design lay with the Surveyor of County Courts. County courts under surveyors tended to be Italianate, while towards the end of the century, Gothic Revival was more generally favoured. This change in style was paralleled by the move from classical to Gothic detailing in Assize Courts. After 1870 responsibility for designing county courts passed to HM Office of Works, resulting in a more homogenous approach.

### Coroners' courts

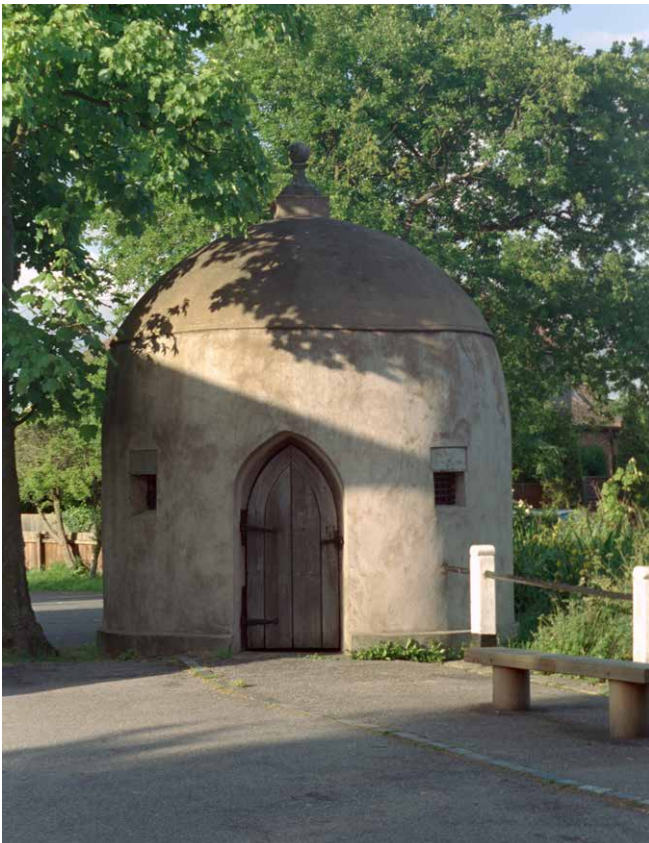
Before the late nineteenth century, coroners' inquests were held in a variety of buildings, including town and vestry halls, Magistrates' Courts, Poor-Law institutions and public houses. The main requirement was for a room of adequate size that could be available at short notice. The Coroner's Act of 1887 established the duties of the modern coroner, which are primarily to investigate the cause and circumstances of deaths and new Coroners' Courts were designed specifically for the holding of such inquests.

Coroner's courts reflected changing sensibilities towards the dead. Because both coroner and jury had to view the body before an inquest, it was desirable that a court should be close to a mortuary and, after 1866, the latter were adapted to serve as places where bodies could be kept before inquests and post-mortems were held, and in the 1890s and 1900s were commonly situated to the rear of the court. During the twentieth century the need to view the body was reduced and therefore Coroners' Courts could be included in general municipal buildings.

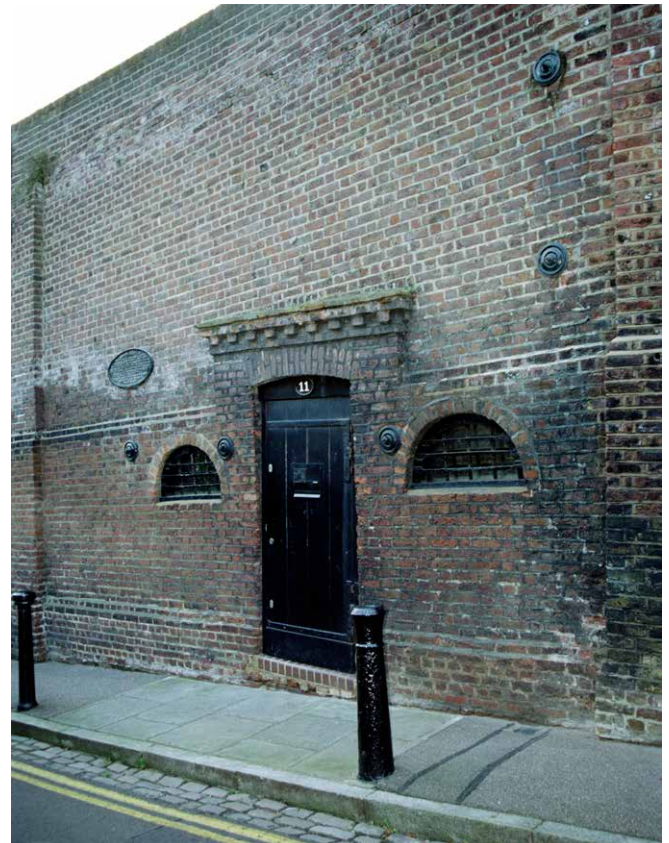
## 1.4 Police stations

Systems of local policing can be dated far back into the pre-Conquest period, and local arrangements of watch-men, sometimes with bespoke quarters and lock-ups (Figs 7-8), were common features in the Georgian city (see below, under Prisons). In terms of organisation and the provision of new premises, London led the way. The modern police force was effectively created with the 1829 Metropolitan Police Act, which established a 1,000-strong force in the capital, organized along military lines, responsible, as today, to the Home Office. The structure comprised a hierarchy of rank with chief inspectors, sergeants and constables. The new headquarters for this revamped and established

force was Whitehall Place, adjacent to Scotland Yard. Operating initially from converted private houses, it was not until 1842 that a department was set up whose sole function was the design, erection and maintenance of purpose-built police buildings for the Metropolitan Police. Outside of the metropolis the Lighting and Watching Act of 1833, and the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, appointed paid local constables for towns with a population over 5,000. Paid County Police forces were established by the County Police Act of 1839 whilst the 1856 Country and Borough Police Act completed national coverage such that the entire country was covered by 1857 leading to the significant expansion in the provision of police stations.



**Figure 7**  
The Cage, at Shenley (Hertfordshire), is an eighteenth-century lock-up used to detain those guilty of petty nuisance or awaiting transfer for more serious crimes. It contains tablets bearing the inscription 'Do well, and fear not/ Be sober, be vigilant'. Listed Grade II.



**Figure 8**  
The Old Parish Lock-up on Cannon Lane, Hampstead (London Borough of Camden), of about 1730 – a single vaulted brick cell – is still discernable despite being incorporated into the garden wall of a new house in the 1830s after it became redundant. Listed Grade II.





**Figure 9**

Many small rural police stations were domestic in character. This example of 1843 in Howden, East Yorkshire, was designed by H.P. Lockwood with more than a hint of the picturesque villa about it – despite the lock-up to the rear. Listed Grade II.



**Figure 10**

Bow Street Magistrates Court and Police Station in London (1879-80) – an evocative address as the home-base of Sir Robert Peel’s original ‘Bow Street runners’, the forerunners of our modern police force. Designed by Sir Robert Taylor of the Office of Works. Listed Grade II.

Early police stations were domestic in character, usually Gothic in style, and rather like contemporary parish vicarages (Fig 9). After 1846, the new Surveyor of County Courts (Charles Reeves) assumed responsibility for the design and erection of purpose-built County Courts and police stations (see Courts above) and adopted the distinctive Italianate design that characterised both building types during the middle years of the nineteenth century.

Police stations had four main elements: the administrative block to the front, a cell block, police accommodation and a drill yard. Inside, features included an enquiry counter where the public would speak to a duty officer, and separate rooms (such as an interview room, a superintendent’s room and, from 1880, a medical room). These were linked by a corridor to a number of cells. Also provided, either in the same building or in a separate block, were rooms for use by the constables: a day room, mess room, kitchen, and boot room, and sometimes a house for the inspector. Above the station, or in a separate block, there would usually be rooms for around ten men, with shared baths and toilets, library and recreation room, uniform room, and drying room. After about 1880, with an

increasing number of officers, accommodation was kept separate from the station, in a new building type, the section house. These could be tall buildings – often up to six storeys high, and contained dormitories for single men alongside other facilities. Other features to look for include an exercise yard, drill yard, stables and kennels, perhaps a mortuary and, increasingly, space for the police motor vehicles, along with associated boundary walls, gates, railings and fixed furniture like the famous blue Windsor lanterns introduced in 1861.

Following widespread civil unrest in the 1880s, the government invested in more stations and section houses. Under the influence of Richard Norman Shaw, the Queen Anne style – most highly developed at the Metropolitan Police headquarters at New Scotland Yard (1887-90; listed Grade I) – was widely adopted, combining civilised domesticity with impregnable corner towers (set on a base of granite dug by Dartmoor convicts). In London 350 stations and magistrates’ courts were built between 1842 and 1900 – almost as many as the rest of the country put together - creating an exceptional heritage of the architecture of law and order in the capital (Fig 10).





**Figure 11**  
An inventive 1904 design for police station, station house and court by the Berkshire County Surveyor, Joseph Morris, on Milton Road, Wokingham. Listed Grade II.



**Figure 12**  
Manchester's magnificent Baroque Revival combined Fire and Police Station of 1901-06 includes plentiful accommodation for the firemen together with an opulent Coroner's Court; it speaks of civic pride at its highest level. Listed Grade II\*.

Victorian and Edwardian police stations outside London were generally designed by the architects responsible for municipal buildings. The requirements for accommodation were broadly similar but the range of styles adopted tended to be wider: some, especially in rural locations, were sensitive to local vernacular traditions. Major divisional headquarters for the police were usually designed as part of a civic complex that included courts, a weights and measures office or a fire station (Fig 11). This led to complex and ingenious designs often wrapped up in grand Baroque elevations (see Courts above) as at Manchester's London Road Fire and Police station of 1901-06 by Woodhouse, Willoughby and Langham (listed Grade II\*, Fig 12) where the group included flats for all the men, comparable to and generally of a better standard than contemporary local authority housing. The twentieth century favoured more restrained styles – neo-Georgian, or stripped classical, with occasional flourishes of Dutch expressionist outlines and ornamental brickwork – but planning remained complex and, if anything, became more sophisticated as municipal and civic functions were combined as is the case, for instance, at the Central Police Station, Magistrates Court, and Fire Station in Newcastle-

upon-Tyne (1931-33 by Cackett, Burns Dick, and Mackellar; listed Grade II).

A programme of modernisation and expansion took place in the 1950s; this led to alterations to the older stations. Strict national regulations gave little room for architectural experiment or advance although much ingenuity could be spent on resolving the planning problems, usually behind a traditional elevation. Many headquarters police buildings of the 1950s were designed by the county architect as a part of the civic centre of the town, setting the standard for the buildings that followed. London police stations adopted a more modernistic idiom, a fashion that spread to other authorities in the 1960s. But by and large, stations of the 1960s, with notable exceptions such as McMorran and Whitby's Grade II\* listed police station in Wood Street, City of London, were hardly distinguishable from the 1960s commercial office block, and very little indeed is listed from recent decades. The notion of the inherent architectural 'message' of dignity, solidity, and security; of form reflecting functions; and of regional distinctiveness in style, had all but disappeared.

## 1.5 Prisons

Before the 1770s imprisonment was not the standard punishment, prisons usually being places of detention prior to some form of corporal or capital punishment being carried out. Any secure building might be used. In 1698 Justices of the Peace (JPs) were given additional responsibility for building or repairing county gaols, but only at York was a new prison built, in 1701-05 (listed Grade I). Larger pre-1770s purpose-built prisons were rare. Like hospitals, their outward architectural form was polite, being modelled on the formal facades of fashionable large houses. Cells were rare before John Howard's reforms (see below) and were often restricted to prisoners awaiting execution. Serious offenders might face transportation, initially to America, and later, to Australia. In villages, often policed by local constables paid for by the manor or parish, single cell lock ups were provided to hold inebriates and other miscreants overnight. These can be as simple as a sturdy timber or stone box, but some are larger and more elaborate. Early Watch houses may also hold a simple cell, and where they survive (as at Yalding, Kent) they have been designated.

### Later Georgian prisons

John Howard in the 1770s was the first to systematically document prison conditions, to propose a solution, and to use his political skills to achieve reforms. Under his influence many prisons were rebuilt and prison conditions were significantly improved. At the heart of Howard's system was the need to separate different categories of offender who would spend the days working together but who at night would sleep in small, single cells (Fig 13). As well as cell blocks, new prisons would include an infirmary and a chapel, two essentials if prisoners were to be cared for and reformed. The earliest prisons where his system can still be seen are at HMP Stafford (listed Grade II) and Littledean Gaol, Gloucestershire (listed Grade II\*), both designed in the second half of the 1780s by Howard's associate William Blackburn. At Liverpool (now demolished) he pioneered a detached radial plan that became the dominant (but never the



**Figure 13**

A former prison built in 1787 in Walsingham, Norfolk, now happily re-used as a furniture store. Originally it had 53 cells, day rooms, exercising yards and an infirmary, plus four tread mills for grinding corn. Enlarged in 1822 to become a County House of Correction. Listed Grade II.

exclusive) form in the early nineteenth century. In this arrangement, a central block enabled guards to supervise prisoners in the yards rather than in the cell blocks. The largest prison of this type was at Maidstone (Kent) by Daniel Asher Alexander: this survives in part (various buildings listed Grade II), with a fittingly stern exterior. By the 1820s prisons were facing a crisis. Classification schemes (and the need for greater segregation) had become complex, and crime rates caused growing concern: the reforming penal system with its notion of useful labour was evidently not reducing levels of re-offending. Consequently, harsher punitive regimes were introduced (such as the treadwheel, or the individual hand-crank in a cell); some vestiges of the former's buildings survive, but are rare: plan form analysis can sometimes provide the evidence.

### Victorian prisons

Central government played an increasingly important role in prison design, which had hitherto been largely left to county authorities to administer. Various harsh regimes were experimented with, including the 'separate system' that combined both silence and separation. This was first enforced in a purpose-

built prison that became the model for prison discipline and design: Pentonville (London Borough of Islington; listed Grade II), designed by Col. Joshua Jebb for the Home Office (1840-42). It had a radial plan with four cell blocks around a central hall. The wings had three stories with cells on either side of an open central corridor, the upper tiers of cells being reached from galleries. Individual cells contained all the necessities of prison life but evidence for these has largely disappeared. It became the model for prisons until supplanted by Wormwood Scrubs in the 1870s, with its separate wings (below). By 1850 around 60 British prisons had been rebuilt or were being altered to conform to the separate system, and between 1842 and 1877 nineteen radial prisons were erected in England. In addition to new prisons, Pentonville-style wings were added to some prisons, while at others the existing buildings were altered or progressively rebuilt.



**Figure 14**  
Liverpool's grim and forbidding Main Bridewell of 1860-64 – its name, from London's Bridewell, being a generic term for a prison – by John Weightman, still employs the classical language of architecture to raise it above the merely functional. Listed Grade II\*.

Up to the mid nineteenth century children who committed crimes were commonly sent to adult prisons as there was no separate provision. Philanthropic societies and private founders set up some voluntary reformatories for young people in the early nineteenth century but it was not until the Youthful Offenders Acts of 1854 that state registered institutions were established and pre-existing private reformatories were brought under state certification. Reformatories were distinguished from Industrial Schools (see the [Education](#) selection guide) by taking young people who had actually committed offences, as opposed to those who were merely destitute or neglected and in danger of falling into crime. Adel Reformatory, Leeds, of 1857 designed by William Hewitson, is a notable early example (listed Grade II) complete with swimming pool to encourage the rehabilitation of young offenders in the fishing industry once they had served their sentence. By 1876 the number of schools had risen to 53, but fell to 41 by 1894.

By the second half of the nineteenth century specialised buildings were being built alongside the cell blocks: infirmaries and a reception block for new inmates with a store for their property. There were also kitchens, workshops and a laundry, often beside the female wing. Prison governors were accommodated in purpose-built houses close to the prison. With the decline in transportation during the 1850s and 1860s a new generation of prisons was built.

### 1877-1940

The Prison Act 1877 placed all local prisons under the control of a central Prison Commission and by 1878 the number of prisons had been reduced from 113 to 69 as small, unsuitable, prisons were closed. The Commission's first chairman, Sir Edmund du Cane, designed Wormwood Scrubs (London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, 1874-91; various buildings listed Grades II and II\*): with its four parallel cellblocks linked at their centre by covered walkways oriented so that all cells received some sunlight during the day, it became the model for many new prisons between the 1880s and the 1950s. Regimes re-focused on



rehabilitation in the 1890s and prisoners were taught trades and worked together, sometimes in purpose-built workshops. The twentieth century saw the introduction of ever more specialised prisons, including those for women and juveniles: the Borstal system (named after the first such institution in Borstal, Kent, in 1902), superseded reformatories for young offenders. Experimental open prisons were introduced during the 1930s, with compounds of huts and outdoor work taking the place of incarceration in secure permanent buildings.

By the end of the 1950s penal reformers and architectural writers were denouncing the latest prisons as being old-fashioned. In 1959 a scheme for a new type of prison was developed which placed greater emphasis on association, classrooms, gyms and other facilities. HMP Blundeston (Suffolk), the first of these so-called 'New Wave' prisons, was opened in July 1963, and became the dominant architectural form employed in the 1960s prisons. More recent developments, probably inspired by 'New Generation' American prisons, developed informal campus layouts.

## 1.6 Law, order and public security

### Police boxes

These first appeared in the early twentieth century (along with the reduced version – the police telephone pillar) containing a telephone, a temporary cell and a lamp to attract attention. The boxes (and pillars) are now very rare and surviving examples, if not already listed, would be strong candidates. **Huts and boxes**, simple structures to provide cover and protection for individuals keeping watch, range in type from sentry boxes to parish or vestry watch houses. Surviving Georgian examples, such as the pair of watchman's huts at Sydney Place, Bath (listed Grade II\*), may be listable if reasonably unaltered.

### Gibbets, stocks, pillories and whipping posts

Wooden examples dating from the late seventeenth century onwards have survived but are likely to have been much renewed (sometimes

they have been brought into the churchyard for safe-keeping) and were often the responsibility of the local Constable operating from a Watch House (for churchyard watch houses see the [Places of Worship](#) selection guide). In some cases wooden stocks were replaced by iron at quite an early age. All examples may be listable for historical reasons and where a significant proportion of original fabric remains, although authenticity does need to be considered.

## 1.7 Fire stations

Although some local communities were providing fire-fighting equipment in the early seventeenth century, the oldest listed fire stations and fire engine houses date to the late eighteenth and are extremely rare. The Great Fire of London in 1666 spurred insurance companies and some municipalities into action and led to a system whereby insured properties were given a badge or fire mark, a system ended by legislation only in 1938. Fire marks can still be found on buildings today. A Fire Establishment was created in Brighton in 1831, and in 1833 the insurance company brigades in London came together under the title of the London Fire Engine Establishment, operating from 13 stations. A city fire brigade was formed in Liverpool in 1834 and in 1836 this became part of the newly formed City Police Force.

The Metropolitan Fire Brigade Act of 1865 brought the control of the London Fire Engine Establishment under the Metropolitan Board of Works; significantly it was publicly funded. This reorganisation led to an increase in the number of fire stations in the capital. In 1889 the control of fire fighting in London was taken over by the newly-formed London County Council and in 1904 the Establishment was renamed the London Fire Brigade (LFB). This was a golden period of fire station design, when the young architects working for the Council drew on a huge variety of influences to create unique and commanding stations, often built to a bespoke design and plan; the exemplar is Euston, in the London Borough of Camden (1901-2; listed Grade II\*), although even more eye-catching is at Catford, in the London



**Figure 15**  
An extraordinary fire station design of 1901 from the inventive London County Council Architects' Department Fire Brigade Section. Mixing the Arts and Crafts Movement's regard for pragmatics with an unusual Japanese influence – is that a stair turret or a pagoda? – it is a local landmark on Catford's Perry Vale in the south London Borough of Lewisham. Listed Grade II.



**Figure 16**  
One of the more surprising designs for a fire station is this delicate neo-Tudor example of 1911 (now converted to commercial use) on Chester's Northgate Street. Its design responds not only to architectural fashion but also Chester's wealth of timber-framed architecture. Listed Grade II.

Borough of Lewisham (listed Grade II; Fig 15). Elsewhere, brigades were organised by the police, insurance companies, a variety of businesses, and private individuals.

In the second half of the nineteenth century purpose-built fire stations began to appear all over the country, usually around the time of the formation of local brigades (Fig 16). The introduction of motorised fire engines about 1905 had a major impact. The older stations were often too small, and too awkwardly located in central urban sites, for the new vehicles, resulting in the closure of many, which were often adapted for other uses. New purpose-built fire stations were typically sited on large roads and divided into distinct areas: one for appliances and one for staff. The fire-fighting vehicle was kept in an engine shed or engine house, which might accommodate one or more appliances in appliance bays, accessed by large doors opening onto an adjacent highway. Where the building was erected on a

restricted site it was common for multiple storeys of offices and accommodation to sit above the engine sheds: look-out towers were incorporated into early designs, so height could be a consideration. Historic and modern fire stations may contain offices, a kitchen, a recreation room and a dormitory for watches on night shift. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was common for staff to live in purpose-built flats above the fire station or in adjacent housing supplied for this purpose, as at Birmingham's large, Grade II -listed, Central Fire Station of 1935 by City Surveyor Herbert Humphries with Herbert Manzoni (which even included a school with roof-top playground). To the rear of the fire station, there might be a yard for drill and for cleaning appliances and equipment. There may also be a workshop and training buildings such as towers and mock houses, and hose-drying towers. Grander fire stations sometimes had tiling to the walls and floors of the engine room, as well as the famous brass poles to connect them

with the upper floors (now considered unsafe and increasingly removed). Typically on the yard side, to the rear of the engine room, is a covered washing area for cleaning the engines.

The Fire Brigades Act 1938 made it compulsory for local authorities to provide adequate fire services. In 1941 the Government created the National Fire Service to unify fire-fighting throughout the country, leading to new national standards and greater compatibility in equipment. In 1948 fire-fighting services were returned to local authority control and 148 borough and county council-run fire brigades were established. Most working stations today date from after the introduction of this legislation, and fire station provision continues to reflect changes in local government organisation.

From 1902 specialised teams drawn from the fire brigades were created by groups of mine owners to provide rescue teams for trapped miners. Three of the associated buildings are

currently listed in the north of England including the Boothstown Mines Rescue Station, Swinton, Greater Manchester (Bradshawe, Gass, and Hope, 1932-33; listed Grade II), which includes not only the rescue station itself but recreated mines in which to practice rescue techniques.

## 1.8 Forest and local courts

Many English regions had ancient courts reflecting their own local economy, especially those which regulated forests and woodlands and those associated with mining – tin in Cornwall, lead in the Peak District – before a more unified system of justice came in during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Such courts typically met in private houses or pubs, although purpose-built structures are to be found: few are as ambitious as Speech House in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, built for the Verderers' Court in 1676 (listed Grade II; Fig 17).



**Figure 17**  
Speech House, in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, was built in 1676 to accommodate the Verderers' Court

which dealt with the Forest's management. Listed Grade II.



# 2 Specific Considerations

## 2.1 General considerations

Before giving some guidance on specific types of building, some over-arching considerations can be set out.

### Architectural interest

Because the building types covered in this selection guide so overtly aspire to project a social message, their architectural qualities (including planning) are generally the overriding considerations in listing assessments. Such buildings are hierarchical, with some areas being accorded much more attention than others: the principal public areas will be of particular importance when assessing buildings. Decorative or symbolic elements can sometimes be significant. Relatively modest buildings too may be listable where they are skilfully composed and well detailed. Assessment should be appropriate to the status and location of the building; it would be wrong, for example, to judge a small courthouse or municipal offices against examples in major towns and cities, or dismiss a building due to the plainness of its non-public areas. Many buildings in this category, especially those built in the first half of the twentieth century, were designed by municipal architects of considerable accomplishment whose work, nevertheless, was often denigrated by their colleagues in private practice. The rise and fall of Official Architecture may be considered part of the interest of these buildings.

### Alteration

Because of radical changes in the provision of these public services, original or early internal features are vulnerable and in some cases

rarely survive. Their significance should be carefully considered as part of the assessment. Adaptation is inevitable, given changing views on humanitarian issues and changing legislative backgrounds, so a degree of alteration (above all for lesser areas) is to be expected – and can indeed be of interest in its own right.

### Historic interest

All the building types have claim to historic interest to a greater or lesser degree, as narratives of the development of national and local government and emerging civic identity. Central government buildings often have outstanding historic as well as architectural interest, reflected in their listing at higher grades. Well-documented historic associations of national importance may strengthen the case for listing. Normally however, a building should be of architectural merit in itself, or have other claims to interest, for instance early date, rarity, or a particularly high order of degree of survival in order to warrant designation.

Individual buildings must be assessed on their own merits. However, it is important to consider the wider context and where a building forms part of a functional group with one or more listed (or listable) structures this is likely to add to its own interest. Examples might include exercise yards, stores, officer accommodation associated with a court or prison. Key considerations are the relative dates of the structures, and the degree to which they were functionally inter-dependent when in their original uses.

In terms of specific building types the following guidance can be offered:

## 2.2 Town Halls

### Date

Virtually all municipal buildings built before 1840 are already listed, as are many from the middle years of the nineteenth century. From the late nineteenth century increasing selectivity is required because of the greater numbers of survivors. With inter- and post-war town halls, greater survival rates demand rigorous selection: architectural interest will be the principal determinant in assessing modern examples across the range.

### Architectural quality and decorative treatment

Because the projection of a confident municipal image was so important, the quality and finesse of architectural style is of great importance. The façade and the ceremonial spaces provided a canvas for decoration and adornment, often depicting notable local figures or making reference to the historical associations of the town; these can make a strong claim to special interest. Almost every major style was used, from Palladianism in the mid- eighteenth century, via neoclassicism, the Italianate manner, the Gothic Revival, Edwardian Baroque, neo-Georgian, to Scandinavian- and Dutch-inspired modernism of the inter-war years, right up to post-war diversity. It is important also to remember that on rare occasions a stripped, utilitarian design was chosen to convey a specific message about efficiency and thrift to local ratepayers. Poplar Town Hall in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (Culpin and Son, 1937-38; listed Grade II) is the exemplar of this particular idea. Leading architects have been engaged on such buildings throughout, and an association with an architect or sculptor of repute can enhance the significance of a town hall building. But architectural quality is paramount.

### Planning

The planning of town halls was a challenge, given the increasingly complex functions that had to be accommodated within. How these buildings work can thus be crucial: Waterhouse's Manchester Town Hall was admired at the time as much for its ingenious plan as its striking massing and exterior.

Birmingham Town Hall (1831-35) was immediately extended (1835-54), then supplemented by the adjacent Council House (1874-79; listed Grade II\*) which was itself enlarged (1884, 1906-19). Such evolution can add to the interest of a building.

### Setting and civic groups

Town halls are often the most prominent civic buildings in town centres and have an important symbolic role. The northern and midland industrial towns are famous for their grand municipal buildings. Public monuments sometimes embellish spacious settings around the hall, and landscaping too can be of note. By grouping the town hall with other municipal buildings such as law courts, libraries, educational buildings and swimming baths, a powerful municipal complex might emerge, as with Croydon Town Hall (C Henman, 1895; listed Grade II) and East Ham Town Hall (A H Campbell, H Cheers and J Smith, 1901-03; listed Grade II) and, most strikingly, at Southampton Civic Centre (as noted above). Group value can thus be a relevant consideration. Such complexes may sometimes be amenable to additional forms of area designation, and may lie within conservation areas.

### Civic identity

Many new town halls were built in response to a change in civic status, a symbolic expression of an enhanced civic identity. It is important to know the principal dates of a given municipality's institutional development since powers were acquired accretively through individual Acts of Parliament. Leeds Town Hall (as above), for instance, was rebuilt partly to support a campaign to be granted an Assize. Young municipalities frequently built civic buildings early on, as an assertion of newly-won status; an example is the dramatic 1936-37 Dagenham Civic Centre, East London, by E Berry Webber (listed Grade II). This category of buildings often has strong meanings for residents, and due respect must be given to their historic significance as the embodiment of local pride. Allowance must be made for the scale of the project: it would be wrong to judge a small town's civic buildings by the standards of a major conurbation's.

## 2.3 Government buildings

Central government buildings are few in number and are judged on the basis of their architectural interest, degree of completeness and group value.

## 2.4 Law courts

### Date

Virtually all court buildings built before 1840 are already listed, as are many from the middle years of the nineteenth century. Thereafter, greater selection will be required in view of the large numbers built and the high survival rate.

### Architectural quality

Because of the importance attached by government to the legal process, courts throughout the nineteenth century were designed to instil awe and reverence and are comparable in terms of pretension to contemporary town halls. Again, as with town halls, it was only in the later twentieth century that courts were designed to be less formal. Architectural impact is thus a key consideration.

### Function and planning

It is important to establish what sort of court hearings the building housed. Assizes, Petty Sessions, Crown Courts and Coroner's Courts all have different requirements. The planning ingenuity required, especially in large and complex courts, should be a consideration when assessing courts for listing.

### Fixtures

Early courtroom furniture was moveable so that the space could be used for a variety of functions. Courtrooms with significant surviving furnishings are notable; without their courtroom furniture, law court buildings lose much of their historic significance and greater emphasis has to be placed on other factors. Survivals of cells can be worth noting during assessments. As with prisons, alterations for reasons of security or prisoner welfare are to be expected.

## 2.5 Police stations

Police stations are predominately an urban building type, often endowed with dignity, which make a strong townscape contribution. Frequently combined with other public buildings, they usually occupy prominent positions in the high street.

### Selectivity

Because there are so many police stations surviving, with many of them designed to a standardised formula, selection is particularly necessary.

### Date

Relatively early dates for police stations (depending on the location and sort of station) may be significant.

### Architectural quality

This is the primary consideration. Strong compositional qualities, considered details, good quality materials and craftsmanship, for instance, rubbed and moulded brickwork, carved or dressed stonework, fine ironwork, lanterns, and so forth, will be important factors.

### Categories of police stations

A divisional headquarters, or a station designed as part of a court complex, or one that is complete with cells, police accommodation and stables (the latter being particularly rare), is likely to be of more architectural and historic interest.

### Planning

A legible plan form is an important consideration together with the survival of internal features or specialised buildings (such as a police superintendent's house); some alteration is to be expected, however.

## 2.6 Prisons

Prisons are a particularly sensitive building type, having been built to incarcerate people and remove them from society. They can have outward interest, in that architectural efforts were made to project messages of the solemnity of law and punishment. Internally they display considered



planning which reflects changing attitudes to the treatment of the prisoner. Virtually all have undergone radical change, for instance as regimes have altered, as security has been tightened, and as efforts have been made to make room for rising prison populations. Conservation can be reconciled with humanitarian considerations, however, and the identification of those buildings of special interest is important to assist in this positive management.

### Date

Virtually all early prisons built before 1850 are already listed. Thereafter, as prison design became more standardised and as survivals increase, greater selection is necessary. Architectural interest, degree of survival, a building's representativeness as part of the story of prisons overall, and sometimes rarity, will be the principal considerations.

### Planning

Prisons reflect changing attitudes. Some regimes sought to punish, others to reform; more recently, removal from society and physical containment has been the principal end. It is important when assessing prison buildings to identify the type of penal system that was being enforced and to recognise how buildings were adapted as later regimes were employed. It is also important to be aware that although the gatehouse (and sometimes the chapel) is often the only building with overt architectural ambition, more utilitarian buildings on the site may be of equal historic significance. By the end of the nineteenth century prisons consisted not only of a gatehouse and cell blocks but also workshops, infirmaries, reception buildings and staff housing. These are now sometimes rare.

### Alteration

Older prisons will have undergone extensive alteration, and little will remain from pre-Victorian times; thus even partial survivals (say of a treadmill, or a hanging drop) will still be of interest. While completeness is a significant factor for later prisons, working prisons will inevitably have changed to maintain security and in response to evolving ideas on prisoner

welfare. For instance, at most prisons the original cell windows have had to be replaced and slate roof coverings have been replaced by similarly-coloured sheet steel on security grounds. Similarly, internally some cells will probably have been subdivided and walls breached to provide in-cell sanitation.

### Adapted buildings

While most current prisons were purpose-built, a significant number originated as country houses (such as Hewell Grange, Worcestershire, an 1880s house by G F Bodley; listed Grade II\*). Others began life as military camps, workhouses or orphanages. These may merit consideration as prisons, but would need to be assessed more in terms of their original function and overall interest, using the relevant selection guide.

## 2.7 Fire stations

### Date

Given their extreme scarcity, any documented examples of fire engine houses which survive from before the great age of fire station construction in the 1860s are likely to be of special interest, humble as they may be.

### Architectural quality

The architectural forms and styles employed in fire station architecture generally reflect the fashion of the time for public buildings. Victorian picturesque eclecticism (with buildings built by the London County Council around 1900 being the high watermark of this Edwardian Free Style) gave way to neo-Georgian and mildly modern designs (as at Bath) between the wars. Occasionally distinct iconography exists, as at Rochdale Town Hall (1866-71; listed Grade I), where images of a phoenix and a salamander (which was impervious to fire) are featured on corbels. Elsewhere, fire services and authority coats of arms may also be present on the exterior of fire stations. Towers which are physically separate from the main building ought to be considered as well.

### Alteration

Although the vast majority of fire stations in use today were constructed after the Second World War, some pre-war and even late nineteenth-century fire stations are still in use. However, few, if any of these have remained unaltered: fire engines have got larger, requiring wider openings, for example. A balance needs to be taken between remaining interest, and the extent of change and loss.

### Group interest

Purpose-built fire stations may also be part of multi-functional civic complexes, which may reinforce any claims to special interest.

## 2.8 Extent of listing

Amendment to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides two potential ways to be more precise about what is listed.

The empowerments, found in section 1 (5A) (a) and (b) of the 1990 Act, allow the List entry to say definitively whether attached or curtilage structures are protected; and/or to exclude from the listing specified objects fixed to the building, features or parts of the structure. These changes do not apply retrospectively, but New listings and substantial amendments from 2013 will provide this clarification when appropriate.

Clarification on the extent of listing for older lists may be obtained through the Local Planning Authority or through the Historic England's Enhanced Advisory Service, see [www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/EAS](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/EAS).

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