



Accreditation

Collections Development Policy

Garden City Collection, Letchworth Garden City

Name of museum: Garden City Collection

Name of governing body: Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: July 2015

Policy review procedure: Every 5 years

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: August 2020

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

The Garden City Collection tells the story of Letchworth, the world's first Garden City; its antecedents and legacy.

Our collections and activities explore the history of this unique town and its people, and celebrate the incredible achievement of its founder, Ebenezer Howard.

We safeguard and make accessible an internationally significant collection and enable people to explore this collection for inspiration, learning and enjoyment.

We are a Charitable Service of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation helping it to fulfil its charitable objectives and overall purpose to benefit the community of Letchworth Garden City.

- 1.2. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.**
- 1.3. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.**
- 1.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.**
- 1.5. The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections**

management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

- 1.6. The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 1.7 In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:
 - the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
 - the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
 - the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored
 - extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken
 - the item under consideration lies outside the museum's established core collection

2. History of the collections

The First Garden City Heritage Museum was founded in 1984 by Letchworth Garden City Corporation and became the home of the Corporation collections (and thus its predecessor First Garden City Ltd) alongside items deposited on loan from North Hertfordshire District Council who had initially run the museum after it was donated to them by the wife of Letchworth's consultant architect and eminent town planner, Barry Parker. The loan consisted of items that related to the history of Letchworth since the forming of the Garden City in 1903 (earlier periods were collected by the council). This North Hertfordshire District Council collection is now part of a formal 5 year loan agreement with the Council, including a cover letter agreement that the collection will be transferred upon the Garden City Collection becoming accredited. In the intervening years, the First Garden City Heritage Museum continued to build on the collection via donations and purchases. In 2013, the First Garden City Heritage Museum became the International Garden Cities Exhibition. Items of the Collection are displayed at the Exhibition but the museum service is now managed by the Garden City Collection, which operates from its Study Centre. This had formally been the museum store which was expanded by acquiring an additional 'wing'. The additional space has made it more suitable for public tours and has enabled the provision of a professional space for researchers. It has also provided new space for the collection increase.

3. An overview of current collections

The collection consists of around 250,000 items that date from the origin of Letchworth Garden City itself (1903) to the present day. Some items may be purchased from an earlier date if they have a connection to the Garden City Movement or the work of key persons associated with the Movement. More recently we have been open to acquiring works that related to

international garden cities or international communities whose principles are closely aligned to what makes a Garden City – as outlined by the International Garden Cities Institute and its stakeholders.

The majority of the collection tells the story of the rich social history of Letchworth Garden City.

Items may relate to a person or persons who live/lived in Letchworth Garden City if they or the object has/had a strong community connection or was/is of National/International standing/importance. Exceptions to the latter rule may occur if the item in question is considered by museum staff to be of exceptional value in enhancing the museum's ability to interpret the story of Letchworth Garden City.

Because of our remit, most of the museum's collections are items of social history. The strengths of the collection are its links with Arts and Crafts architecture via photographs, architectural plans and drawings and its wonderful and expansive archive of photographs and ephemera relating to Letchworth Garden City. The majority of the collection is paper based.

The collection is divided by the following groupings:

Large Objects

These mostly consist of furniture, the best examples being designs by Barry Parker and items relating to Letchworth Garden City's industry.

Small Objects

This category includes decorative ceramics produced by local firm Icenis or sold in The Crockery shop. It has the widest variation and can be anything from jewellery to bombs.

Architectural plans and drawings

The museum houses an important collection of plans and drawings (and photographs of work) by a number of architects, most significantly by the architect Richard Barry Parker including work undertaken with his early business partner, Raymond Unwin. There are also items by nationally renowned architects such as Baillie-Scott and Courtney Crickmer and substantial holdings of work by local architects such as Hugh Bidwell, Bennett and Bidwell and Cecil Hignett. The museum also holds a large collection of information from properties in Letchworth once owned by Letchworth Urban District Council.

Fine Art

Framed and unframed works by Barry Parker and mostly local artists with the exception of *The Garden City*, by Spencer Gore.

Textiles

The principal examples of textiles in the collection are items created by the Spirella Corset Company of Great Britain and by the St Edmundsbury Weaving Works. The Spirella Collection is large and both this and the examples of St Edmundsbury Weaving works are of national significance.

Social history

By far the largest of the museum's collections. This is an archive of documents, printed ephemera and photographs divided by themes of: People; Groups and Societies; Religion; Education and Streets and Buildings.

Industry

Collections on the Letchworth commerce and industries. Significant collections include The Spirella Corset Company and J M Dent and Co (publishers) archives.

Film and Audio Archive

This exists in a number of formats from cassette tape to digital record. It consists of early film on the Garden City, film by Letchworth Industries, amateur personal films and a varied number of oral histories.

Books and Periodicals:

Collected as items in their own right but also to form a library for researchers at the study centre. Most relate to town planning and the Garden City Movement but there are also collections of work by local authors and those collected by the architect Barry Parker.

Glass Plate Negatives and Lantern Slides

Very early images of life in the early garden city, principally the collection of two local photographers and also collections of images used as publicity by Barry Parker and First Garden City Ltd.

Digital Photographs and Documents

The museum has been collecting digital material since 2003. This followed an earlier procedure by which we would accept loans and make a duplicate film negative of the item. For quality we usually take items on loan and scan them ourselves. Entry forms include a sticker explaining that the donor is agreeing that there is a 'dual' copyright effective regarding the item and that we may use the digital copy as referred to in the standard notes on the reverse of the form. Other digital photographs include documenting buildings and street scenes in Letchworth to preserve their history.

Handling Material

We hold various un-accessioned items which haven't been accessioned as they are part of our reminiscence boxes.

Surrogates

We do not currently collect surrogates, but would consider it, particularly for our books and corsets.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

General Criteria

Current collecting is fairly small in scale and is both active and reactive. Items are purchased for the collection (initiated by the museum) but these are rarely for more than £100. Other items are acquired reactively through donations by the public. Work to increase our profile in the community over the next few years (see Forward Plan) should hope to see an increase in public donations. Much of the collection dates from around 1905 – 1940 and so the museum is to actively seeking more material post -1940.

The museum will only collect material for which there is suitable storage and exhibition space.

Because the museum does not have an in-house conservator and due to the expensive nature of conservation work, we will endeavour to only collect items in good condition. However, with a relatively finite remit of items unique to Letchworth, this is not always possible and exceptions may have to be made in the case of unique and/or rarely available items.

In the past, the museum has accepted large amounts of material relating to properties of lesser significance to the architectural history of Letchworth Garden City. Future collecting will ensure that we only collect the entire architectural documents and plans of significant buildings and only one or two examples of the main design of other buildings (not subsequent applications and extensions).

Future expansion

The main change to previous years is that we will actively collect material relating to the International Garden City Movement as outlined in the previous section.

More pro-active collecting of contemporary and post 1945 material would be beneficial.

The only problem area in terms of collection storage in our current site is that we only have space for a small number of new large items. Our Forward plan includes plans to acquire additional space and alternative accommodation might be the solution in the distant future.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

5.1 The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

The museum has been careful when acquiring items in the past and there is not a big problem with regard to rationalisation. However, we may seek to digitise some property records rather than dispose of them completely, where the records are of lesser significance to the architectural history of Letchworth Garden City (for example, applications to council for outbuildings). There are a handful of items in the collection which are outside our remit, or duplicates, which we may seek to dispose of in the future.

6 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

6.1 The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

7 Collecting policies of other museums

7.1 The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

North Herts Museum

7.3 Formally Letchworth Museum, the remit of the two museums as defined from 1984 is that their policy is to collect items from Letchworth prior to 1903 (the formation of the Garden City) and so there is no overlap. However, when the Letchworth Museum collection was divided and loaned to the First Garden City Museum, some items relating to Letchworth Garden City remained with them. These items remain in the collection of North Hertfordshire District Museum but these collections will not be added to. If loaned (or former loan) items are discovered in the Garden City Collection outside of our remit these will be transferred/returned.

8 Acquisition

8.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

The Curator usually makes the final decision whether something is acquired – particularly for large collections/expensive items. Garden City Collection staff may accept other donations.

8.2 The museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

8.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

9 Human remains

9.1 The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

10 Biological and geological material

10.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

11 Archaeological material

11.1 The museum will not acquire any archaeological material.

12 Exceptions

12.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin**
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin**

In these cases the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The museum will document when these exceptions occur.

13 Spoliation

13.1 The museum will use the statement of principles ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period’, issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

14 The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

No human remains exist in the collection at present but if acquired would be governed by the following:

14.1 The museum’s governing body, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’ issued by DCMS in 2005) , objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

- 14.2 The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.**

15 Disposal procedures

- 15.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.**
- 15.2 The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.**
- 15.3 When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.**
- 15.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.**
- 15.5 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.**
- 15.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.**
- 15.7 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.**
- 15.8 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).**

- 15.9** The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 15.10** Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England/CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales/Museums Galleries Scotland/Northern Ireland Museums Council (delete as appropriate).
- 15.11** The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 15.12** Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

Disposal by exchange

- 15.13** The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.
- 15.13.1** In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.
- 15.13.2** If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or

related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

15.13.3 If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

15.13.4 Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Disposal by destruction

15.14 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

15.15 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

15.16 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.

15.17 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

15.18 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.