

# St Helens Archive Service

## Collections Care and Conservation Policy

### 1. Policy statement and purpose

This policy is one of a set of policies which provide a strategic framework for St Helens Archive Service, expands upon the Conservation and Storage statements and feeds into the Collections Management and Access policies.

The Collections Conservation Policy sets out St Helens Archive Service's approach to collections care and conservation, ensuring the safe custody of the collections for future generations to explore. It also provides a guide to inform decision making and service delivery plans.

### 2. Terminology

- **Preservation:** The retention and maintenance of material over time.
- **Collections Care:** Range of activities intended to safeguard a collection including organisational policies, security, storage, cleaning, maintenance, handling, exhibitions and loans, conservation and emergency planning.
- **Conservation:** Physical practices applied to improve an items condition and increase or extend its accessibility.

### 3. Archive Accommodation

- 3.1.** The secure store is situated in the basement of the Gamble Building. The repository broadly complies with BS4971:2017 (Conservation and care of Archive and library collections).
- 3.2.** The environmental conditions in the Archive Stores are controlled by a dehumidification and air conditioning system (majority of the collections). The conditions are stable and are monitored at regular intervals using a data logger to ensure that conditions remain within permitted ranges. Conditions are also monitored daily as part of Archive Service staff checks and centrally by the Council's Property Maintenance, Investment & Compliance team.
- 3.3.** A pest management program is in place with monitoring of insect blunder traps checked on a monthly basis.

- 3.4. The repository, as part of The Gamble Building, is managed by the Council's Asset Management Team and a service level agreement for the maintenance of the environmental control system is in place.
- 3.5. St Helens Archive Service subscribes to both Harwell Restoration Service and The National Conservation Service. Both subscriptions offer support for the borough collection including conservation advice and onsite guidance in the event of disaster recovery.

#### **4. Security**

- 4.1. The safety of the Archive collections housed in the repository is a priority. The Archive is located in the basement of The Gamble Building and documents stored in individually locked rooms. The building has a comprehensive intruder alarm which is monitored 24/7 by the Council's security service and CCTV covering most external areas.
- 4.2. The collections are safeguarded against the risk of fire. Each Store Room and the Search Room has hand held fire extinguishers. The building has a comprehensive fire alarm system in place, with a combination of heat and smoke sensors. This system is also externally monitored by the Council's Security Service at all times, complying with the latest policy from Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service.
- 4.3. All repository doors are fitted with appropriate locks and are fire resistant. When not in use, all doors are locked securely.
- 4.4. The collections are safeguarded against the ingress of water. There are no water pipes running through the secure store. Maintenance of the roof and drainage systems is undertaken by the Council's Asset Management Team and a reporting procedure for any building faults is in place.
- 4.5. The collections are safeguarded against infestation by pests that could damage the materials in the collections. Regular pest management inspections of all areas of the repository will be made for evidence of pests which could pose a threat to the collections. Approved insect traps are strategically set and monitored.
- 4.6. Staff working areas are accessible by secure code locks. Staff are issued with Council Identity Name Cards specific to the holder. Volunteers are provided with volunteer badges and sign in and out when within the building.
- 4.7. Access to the secure stores is restricted to authorised staff or to permitted individuals and groups under strict supervision (for example, when there are tours of the Archive). The store is locked at all times when unsupervised.
- 4.8. Staff are notified of any maintenance work planned in Store Rooms in advance. Contractors sign in at the Town Hall reception and also on sign in sheets outside each Store Room and are accompanied by St Helens Council Public Building Attendants.
- 4.9. Store Room 3 has access to a lift maintenance area which can be accessed frequently and at short notice; archives within this store room are kept in locked cabinets.

**4.10.** Researchers are asked to sign in and to show identification before items are issued. Staff will ensure that all researchers are supervised whilst using Archive materials so that staff can both offer assistance and maintain the security of the items in use. Lockers are provided for researchers to store their belongings whilst they are viewing Archive materials.

**4.11.** St Helens Archive Service has a Business Impact Assessment, part of the Council Business Continuity Management arrangements, which describes how events will be dealt with. This is reviewed every 6 months. A fully equipped disaster preparedness kit is kept Store Room 1.

**4.12.** The catalogue of St Helens Archive Service's collections can be found online (Calmview site), offline digital (on the Council's shared drive) and paper copy (located in Archive Search Room).

## **5. Collection Care**

5.1. The condition of the collections is assessed in a number of ways:

- An annual stock check, where items are examined for condition, location, catalogue record and packaging.
- Individual item check when accessing collections.

5.2. Any findings will be logged and appropriate action will be taken either in-house or via professionals through the National Conservation Society.

5.3. New acquisitions are inspected for overall condition and the presence of pests, before going to the main Store Rooms.

5.4. St Helens Archive Service aims to package all material in acid free, archival quality materials to protect and preserve the collections. Items identified for repackaging during collection assessments will be dealt with appropriately.

5.5. St Helens Archive Service provide access directly or remotely in accordance with the Access Policy. Documents are consulted by researchers under controlled conditions in accordance with nationally recognised and agreed standards and the Archive Search Room displays guidelines to make the public aware of preservation issues.

5.6. Access to the collections is given to researchers, although the condition of items requested will inform the level of access permitted, e.g. it may not be possible to copy or handle a very fragile item. Digital surrogates may be created as access copies.

5.7. Training and education of staff, volunteers, and users is given in different ways so that they are aware of the safe handling of Archives.

## **6. Review**

<b>Version date</b>	April 2021
<b>Approved by</b>	Bill Renshaw
<b>Date of review</b>	July 2023

