

Conservation Management Documents

Guidelines on Conservation Management Plans and Other Management Documents

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These guidelines introduce owners and managers of heritage items⁽¹⁾ and approval authorities to some of the ways of conserving and properly managing heritage assets. They answer some common questions asked about preparing documents such as:

- statements of heritage significance
- conservation policies
- conservation management plans
- statements of heritage impact.

Retaining the value of a heritage asset presents certain constraints and opportunities on development but should not be seen as a block to future development. If heritage significance is fully understood, then works can be proposed that achieve the item's continuing use, including new development. Adaptation and development may in fact be inspired by and enhance heritage significance, or at least minimise negative impacts.

There are now many heritage specialists who can advise owners on why an item is significant and how its value can be conserved while ensuring future viability. To assist those who wish to engage a consultant a model brief is included at the end of this document which can be adapted to suit the particular circumstances.

The advice in these guidelines is based on the three step NSW Heritage Management System — investigate significance, assess significance and manage significance.

(1) Heritage items can be buildings, structures, places, relics or other works of historical, aesthetic, social, technical/research or natural heritage significance. 'Places' include conservation areas, sites, precincts, gardens, landscapes and areas of archaeological potential.



CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTS

WHY PREPARE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTS?

In November 1995, the Heritage Council of NSW adopted the policy *Altering Heritage Assets*. The policy recognizes that development proposals should consider the *overall* significance of an item, and its value to the community.

Decisions affecting a heritage item therefore need to be based on:

- a careful analysis of why the item is significant
- policies that have been developed to retain that significance
- conservation strategies to achieve the long term viability of the item or area.

WHAT IS A STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE?

Heritage significance means an item is of value to the community. It may relate to our cultural history, our sense of identity, be of scenic or creative quality, or have the potential to inform us about the past.

A statement of heritage significance summarises why an item is valued by the community, based on sound research and analysis.

WHY PREPARE A STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE?

A statement of heritage significance enables all those involved to fully understand the heritage item and why it is of value for present and future generations. The conservation of the item and any new works can then be tailored to have the least impact on its heritage significance. The statement allows managers to consider opportunities for using heritage significance in a positive way, as well as making them aware of constraints or inappropriate development of the item.

In most instances, the heritage significance of an item will have been assessed — by a local council, the National Trust or by the Australian Heritage Commission — and a statement of significance will have been prepared as part of the process. Though such assessments ‘flag’ to the community that an item is significant, they are not intended to give guidance on how to minimise the impact of proposed work, or how to manage an item’s future use.

HOW CAN A PROFESSIONAL HELP IN INVESTIGATING SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTEXT?

Although it is possible for owners and managers to carry out some research, it is more efficient if the research is guided by experienced professionals. Historians are skilled at interpreting historical documents and placing an item in its historical and contemporary social context. Archaeologists are expert at looking at what a heritage item can tell us about the past from the layers of potential and known physical evidence. Architects, landscape architects, engineers and others with design and construction expertise can quickly assess a heritage item and summarise what its fabric and setting tell us about its significance.

When engaging consultants to research and assess heritage, make sure you clearly state what is required, and that you want a concise summary of evidence in their particular field of expertise that will help in assessing the item’s significance. You should also consider engaging them to assist in the analysis, or in reviewing it and the statement of significance.⁽¹⁾

HOW IS A STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE PREPARED?

A statement of heritage significance is based on an orderly process: firstly, facts gathered about an item from physical and documentary research are summarised; then analysed — with regard to the historical context in which the item was created and used, and the item’s social value.

This process is described in *Assessing Heritage Significance*. This document explains how the seven State Heritage Register criteria are used to assess the *nature* and degree of an item’s significance — arriving at a definitive set of conclusions about its overall heritage significance.

In preparing a statement of significance the wording of the assessment criteria should only be used as a guide. If any matter is unresolved or uncertain, this should be stated. The principal statement should be concise and accessible to the general reader.

(1) See also *History and Heritage, Investigating Fabric and Heritage Curtilages*, 1996, published by the Heritage Office.



WHAT IS A HIERARCHY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE?

To understand the heritage significance of an item it is usually necessary to analyse the significance of each part as well as the whole. For example, a large hospital site may consist of several precincts as well as individual structures; an industrial site might include a machinery collection warranting a statement of significance separate from that of the site as a whole.

To assess a complex or large site, it is often helpful to categorise or zone the item. A hierarchy of significance can then be established by specifying a degree of significance for each of these zones or for particular elements. This method is useful as a basis for formulating a conservation policy. For example, parts of a site might have already been compromised by development, therefore substantial alterations or adaptation can be justified; however, other parts might be of exceptional significance, and extensive intervention would not be appropriate.

Categories of significance that are frequently used are:

- exceptional
- considerable
- some
- little
- intrusive.

If a heritage ranking system is used, the assessor must indicate how the ranking has been determined and applied.

WHAT ARE THE DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES?

Once determined, the fabric, spaces and relationships which demonstrate an item's significance need to be conserved and properly managed. This does not prohibit future development such as appropriate adaptive reuse. Constraints and opportunities on the future development and use of an item need to be considered. Some points to look at are:

- the level of management for the item — local or State
- the short and long term aspirations that owners might have for the item
- structural integrity

- planning controls and guidelines
- land use and zoning
- building regulations
- health and fire safety regulations
- opportunities for heritage significance to be interpreted for the community, and its tourism potential
- contribution of the item to the identity of the community
- community perceptions and aspirations for the item and its surrounding area
- heritage incentives available (e.g. funding through the local council or Heritage Incentives Program)
- changes that can be tolerated without major impact on significance
- appropriateness of original uses, existing uses and other possible compatible uses
- ability to be adapted for new uses with modern services
- adjacent development
- the appropriate physical context for the item and its curtilage
- the conservation processes described in Articles 11 to 22 of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, including preservation, restoration, reconstruction and adaptation
- the possible existence of hidden relics which require investigation, and excavation permits.

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION POLICY?

A conservation policy explains the principles to be followed to retain or reveal an item's significance. The aim is to show how the heritage significance of the item can be enhanced and maintained. This relies on a full understanding of the item's significance and a review of the constraints and opportunities arising out of that significance.

The policy should be a positive set of guidelines for enhancing a heritage asset and its significance — not a set of restrictive rules. Heritage items that are restrained by inappropriate policies are in danger of having no viable use and are therefore likely to be neglected, falling into disrepair.

The policy should be closely-related and cross-referenced to the statement of significance and to the significance of various elements of the item. Some parts of a heritage item, for example, might be more adaptable to a new use; or it may be essential to retain and enhance some views to, and from, the heritage item.



CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTS

The appended model brief (see page 7) for a conservation management plan includes the requirements of a conservation policy and can be adapted to this stage in the management process. A policy should be concise, and acceptable to all the parties involved in managing the item's future.

WHAT ABOUT PHYSICAL CONDITION?

The physical condition of a heritage item does not affect its significance unless it has been so altered, by extensive structural changes or lack of maintenance, that heritage significance cannot be understood by the community without considerable reconstruction. This mainly applies to aesthetic



The Cadia Engine House is listed on the State Heritage Register. It is the only surviving example of this kind of Cornish beam engine which drove the winding and pumping machinery for the mine as well as the stone breakers and crushers used for the extraction of the copper ore. The Engine House and the surrounding mining landscape have been the subject of a conservation management plan endorsed by the Heritage Council. This site is conserved and managed by Newcrest Mines who operate Australia's largest open cut gold mine. Photo: Tracey Ireland.

significance values. If an item is of historical or social significance as, for example, the home of a prominent Australian, then the changes that this historical figure made to the item will be of heritage significance, even if they impact negatively on aesthetic significance values.

When preparing a conservation policy, it is important that there is a reasonable knowledge of the condition and structural integrity of the item. If substantial restoration, reconstruction or adaptation is required the impact of these works needs to be appraised in relation to the maintenance of its heritage significance.

Note: When inspecting the fabric of an item, any urgent repair or stabilisation work required should be reported to the owner or appropriate agent.

WHAT ABOUT BUILDING REGULATIONS?

In some cases, the layout of an existing item may not satisfy the requirements of current regulations and ordinances (for safety, fire and related risks of new structures). There are opportunities to negotiate designs that will meet the performance standards of these codes while preventing possible negative impacts on heritage significance.

WHAT ARE THE MANAGEMENT ISSUES?

The implications of a conservation policy to other factors affecting the value of a place or item need to be assessed and stated. These factors may include:

- necessary emergency works
- security and maintenance
- conservation of the item's setting, where this is part of its significance
- financial resources
- management resources and issues
- the need for signs (directional, interpretive, advertising) and how they should be designed and placed
- interpretation of heritage significance
- community access to the item.

(See also the list of constraints and opportunities previously addressed.)



WHAT IS A CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN?

A conservation management plan states the conservation policy and the statement of significance and looks *in more detail* at achieving the future viability of the item and retaining the maximum heritage significance in future development proposals.

The appended model brief explains what is contained in such plans.

Note: The terms conservation management plan and conservation plan are both used by heritage managers and consultants. Both the Heritage Office and the Heritage Council prefer the term conservation management plan because of its greater emphasis on *managing* the heritage asset.

WHAT IS A STATEMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT?

A statement of heritage impact analyses and justifies the impact of any proposal to alter a heritage item (which includes carrying out work within a heritage conservation area). It is prepared with reference to a conservation management plan, a conservation policy and/or a statement of heritage significance for the item. Where the proposed work departs from stated policies, or the impact is detrimental to the heritage significance of the item, a statement of heritage impact must clearly argue why such work is required for the item's long term viability.

Ideally, the impact would be such that the significance of the heritage item is not compromised, but rather enhanced by, for example, its stabilisation or repair and, where appropriate, restoration, reconstruction, adaptive re-use or sympathetic new development.

A statement may be required to accompany a building or development application. It should be succinct. Pertinent documents, such as physical condition reports, can be attached. Evidence may be included as to why alternative solutions are not viable.

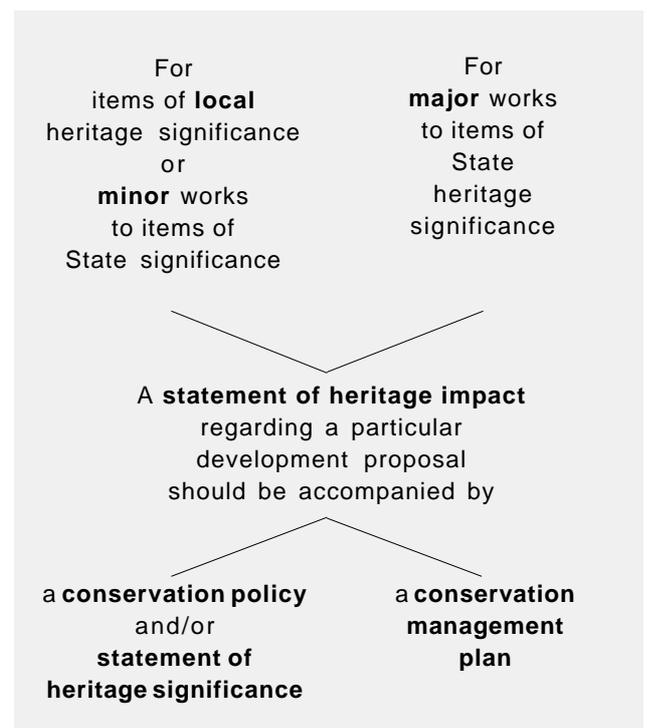
Statements of Heritage Impact lists, for various types of development proposals, some of the questions which should be answered in a statement of heritage impact and the supporting information required.

WHEN IS A STATEMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT REQUIRED?

The Heritage Council now requests that every development proposal that comes before it be accompanied by a statement of heritage impact, in line with other development control bodies, such as the Sydney City Council.

The statement of heritage impact for items of local significance, or for development proposals which entail only minor works, can be based on a conservation policy and statement of significance only. However, for complex proposals affecting items of State heritage significance, the statement must be supported by a conservation management plan.

The Heritage Council encourages all development approval authorities to require a statement of heritage impact before considering any proposal to alter a heritage item. Also, such proposals should be accompanied by full documentation prepared in accordance with the *Heritage Approvals guideline*.





CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTS

DO I NEED A CONSULTANT?

For simple development proposals affecting items of local significance, the statement of heritage significance and statement of heritage impact can be prepared by the building owner or manager. The assistance of local council planners, heritage advisors and the Heritage Office can be sought where necessary.

A conservation policy, conservation management plan and statement of heritage impact for a complex proposal which affects an item of State heritage significance should be prepared by a consultant experienced in heritage conservation matters. The Heritage Office can advise on suitable consultants.



Dame Eadith Walker Estate, Concord, a complex of 19th century buildings in an essentially rural setting, is an exceptionally rare example of a large Edwardian private residential estate in Australia. The property is listed on the State Heritage Register and managed by the Central Sydney Area Health Service. In 1993, the main building on the estate, 'Yarala', was conserved and adapted for use as a renal dialysis centre.

The conservation management plan includes detailed conservation policy for key elements on the estate and an open space management plan for parkland. The demolition of a number of buildings and structures during the past thirty years and the gradual decline in the overall condition of the gardens and landscape has resulted in diminution of the heritage importance of the property. It is extremely important that further deterioration should be prevented, with emphasis being placed on sympathetic uses associated with the dialysis centre for vacant buildings on the estate. Photo: Lindy Kerr.

Model Brief

For the Preparation of a Conservation Management Plan or Other Document

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Note: This model brief is written with reference to a conservation management plan. Equally, it can be used to engage consultants to prepare less detailed conservation documents, such as a statement of significance or a conservation policy.

This model brief should be adapted for the particular situation. Some sites, for example, may require a greater emphasis on community participation. It may also be appropriate to stage the process; for example, by preparing a brief up to 'ASSESS SIGNIFICANCE' as a first stage, to determine whether a full conservation management plan is required.

INTRODUCTION

A conservation management plan (the plan) details why an item is considered to be of heritage significance and outlines policies to retain this significance that allow for economic re-use, possible future development and ongoing management and maintenance.

This brief sets out the work required for the conservation management plan for [*name and address of heritage item*]:

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Description [*one paragraph*]:

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CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTS

OBJECTIVES

In preparing the *conservation management plan* the objectives are to:

- understand the heritage item through investigation of its historical and geographical context, its history, fabric, research potential, and importance to the community
- prepare a *statement of significance* — the plan will analyse documentary and physical evidence to determine the nature, extent and degree of significance of the heritage item
- develop a *conservation policy*, arising out of the statement of heritage significance, to guide current and future owners of the item on the development potential of the item and its ongoing maintenance. Constraints and opportunities are to be examined
- consider current proposals for re-use or development, and how they can best be achieved in accordance with the conservation policy. Where proposals may have an adverse impact on the heritage significance of the item, the need for such work must be justified. Where development proposals have not been finalised, several likely options are to be discussed
- recommend how the heritage item can best be managed bearing in mind those responsible and interested in its ongoing conservation. It is to include proposals to review the conservation management plan and the item's maintenance.

[Also note here particular issues that the client wants addressed in, or resolved by, the plan; for example, curtilage, areas where future development could occur, guidelines for future development, fire safety issues, significance of finishes or a schedule of conservation works.]

AREA TO BE ADDRESSED

The boundary of the heritage item is to be clearly identified.

[A plan with northpoint should be attached as part of the brief, together with any other material relevant to the site (such as a National Trust listing sheet or local heritage study inventory sheet). If what is being addressed is the impact of a proposal on a surrounding area with heritage significance, the boundaries of that area should be indicated.]

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AVAILABLE INFORMATION

The conservation management plan is to be a concise document. Information on the item or its site included in previous reports is not to be repeated, unless of particular relevance. Rather, simply refer to the other documentation available in the plan.

[List here relevant documents relating to the item or its site.]

BACKGROUND MATERIAL

The following documents are to be used to develop the statement of significance, conservation policy and management guidelines.

Australia ICOMOS 2000, Australia ICOMOS *Charter for the Conservation of Cultural Significance (The Burra Charter)* and *Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance, Conservation Policy, and Undertaking Studies and Reports*, Australia ICOMOS, ACT. The Burra Charter gives definitions for terms used in heritage conservation, discusses acceptable conservation processes and establishes the best practice for achieving the heritage conservation of a particular item.

Heritage Office 1996, *Conservation Management Documents*, HO, Sydney. Revised 2002. These guidelines answer some common queries regarding the preparation of conservation management plans.

Heritage Office 2001, *Assessing Heritage Significance*, HO, Sydney. These guidelines explain how to use historical themes and evaluation criteria to assess heritage significance.

Kerr, James Semple 2000, *The Conservation Plan*, National Trust of Australia (NSW), Sydney. This publication presents a methodology for the preparation of conservation plans.

Additional documents which will be made available to the consultant include:

[The client is to list here documents relevant to the subject, for example, company archives.]



INVESTIGATE SIGNIFICANCE

Gather and analyse written and graphic information (including photographs and drawings) to establish the historic context of the heritage item or place. This will involve comparison with other like items.

Investigate the physical evidence of the item to authenticate its history and to help assess its significance — without excavating or disturbing the fabric.

Evaluate the current condition of the fabric (an archival photographic survey and measured drawings will assist in this, as well as later policy analysis and recommendations for management).

Consult with relevant community and interest groups. [*Optional, as appropriate.*]

Provide a chronological history of the heritage item and its context, including use and significance over time. [*Optional, as appropriate.*]

Analyse the documentary and physical evidence to determine what contributes to the significance of the item.

ASSESS SIGNIFICANCE

Use *Assessing Heritage Significance* and *Archaeological Assessments*, published by the Heritage Office and Department of Urban Affairs and Planning in 1996.

Prepare a *statement of significance*. The main aim in assessing significance is to produce a succinct statement of significance, which summarises an item's heritage values. The statement is the basis for policies and management structures that will affect the item's future. It is important to get it right. In most cases, a short paragraph will suffice. An item of particular importance to the heritage of the State may require a statement that takes up a page or more.

Complete a State Heritage Inventory form for the item (and any sub-items). The form can be downloaded from the Heritage Office website: www.heritage.nsw.gov.au [*Enclose with brief*]. Using the form will assist comparative analysis and cross-checking the assessment of significance.

Indicate the individual significance of the component parts of the item on a one-to-five zoned system:

- exceptional 5
- high 4
- moderate 3
- little 2
- intrusive 1

Indicate how the ranking has been determined and applied. [*Optional, as appropriate.*]

MANAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Outline the constraints and opportunities that arise as a result of the heritage significance of the item.

Outline the constraints and opportunities that arise as a result of the physical condition of the item (for example, structural adequacy, existing services, archaeological relics).

Prepare a succinct statement of *conservation policy* that includes:

- feasible uses — the plan should identify a use, or uses, that are compatible with retaining or enhancing the cultural significance of the item. Briefly explain how each use would impact on the item's significance
- fabric and setting — identify the most appropriate way to conserve the item and its setting
- interpretation — identify the most appropriate ways of making the significance of the place understood. For highly significant sites or those proposed to be used for promotional/ educational purposes a separate interpretation study may be necessary
- controls on intervention — identify the degree of physical intervention acceptable for non-conservation purposes as well as how any essential intervention is to be recorded
- identify priorities for urgent conservation works.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

[*Where the end user or the preference for adaptive re-use and/or development is known.*]

Outline the client's preferred use(s) and the works involved.

Provide guidance on how the works can be implemented while minimising the impact on heritage significance.



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Justify any works that will have a substantial impact on heritage significance, in terms of the viable future of the heritage item.

Explain why other options of less impact have not been considered to be viable.

ASSET MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Management — recommend a management policy (within the context of any new ownership and use) through which future decisions on conservation are to be made (for example a steering committee).

Statutory approvals — outline the necessary approval procedures to allow works to be carried out. Identify any planning or other issues that have a bearing on the adaptive re-use or development of the item.

Maintenance — include a maintenance strategy or give guidance on the need for a specialised ongoing maintenance strategy to be developed in a separate plan of management.

Exemptions — note that if the heritage item is listed on the State Heritage Register, the plan should recommend that certain works (such as maintenance and repair) can be carried out in accordance with section 57(2) of the Heritage Act without requiring the approval of the Heritage Council. (See *Standard Exemptions for Works Requiring Heritage Council Approval*, 1999, part of the Heritage Information Series published by the Heritage Office.)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Provide an executive summary at the beginning of the conservation management plan, highlighting the significance of the item, the main conservation policies and the recommendations for implementation and management. [*Optional, but recommended.*]

MONITORING AND REVIEW

Recommend a time frame for the monitoring and review of the conservation management plan and who should be requested to endorse the plan.

SUPERVISION AND LIAISON

The consultant is to establish a steering committee, made up of relevant stakeholders which is to meet a maximum of five times during the study (once initially, then at each stage of the process). [*Optional, but recommended.*]

The client is:

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The project supervisor(representing the client) is:

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For access to the heritage item the contact is:

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In preparing the conservation management plan consult with the following:

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[*List here organisations such as the National Trust, user groups, local history societies and museums, community groups local council, Heritage Council*].

CONSULTANT SKILLS

The skills of the head consultant and other consultant team members should be appropriate to the task. It may be beneficial to involve a historian in the process, particularly during the assessment phase.

The consultant might also require other specialist assistance such as an archaeologist, engineer or landscape architect. The project supervisor must be notified and must approve any sub-consultants before the project commences.

The following skills are to be included in the consultant team:

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.. [*Optional, as appropriate to the heritage item; for example, horticultural skills, experience with industrial heritage.*]



CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTS

The head consultant is to coordinate and take responsibility for integrating the contributions of sub-consultants into the final report.

The head consultant and the sub-consultants will be identified in the tender or quotation, along with their relevant experience.

All consultants must be given the opportunity to endorse, or comment on, the draft document before finalisation.

TIMING

The draft plan is to be circulated for comment by the client and others as agreed within [...] weeks of engagement.

The plan is to be finalised within [...] weeks of receiving comments from the client.

FORMAT AND NUMBER OF COPIES

[Include here directions on the style of publication (for example, A4 size, spiral-bound, with original photos provided in each copy; floppy disc) and how many copies are required].

GENERAL CONDITIONS (INCLUDING COPYRIGHT)

[Include here a schedule of payments linked to the principle stages for the plan's preparation.]

[Also include clauses on who is to retain copyright for the plan and whose responsibility it is to publish, publicise and sell the approved final document.]

The consultant is to treat as confidential any information obtained in the course of the work, and it shall not be disclosed without the expressed permission of the client, in writing.

BUDGET

[Optional — it is often advantageous to state the available budget and ask the tendering consultants to state in a return brief what they will achieve for this.]

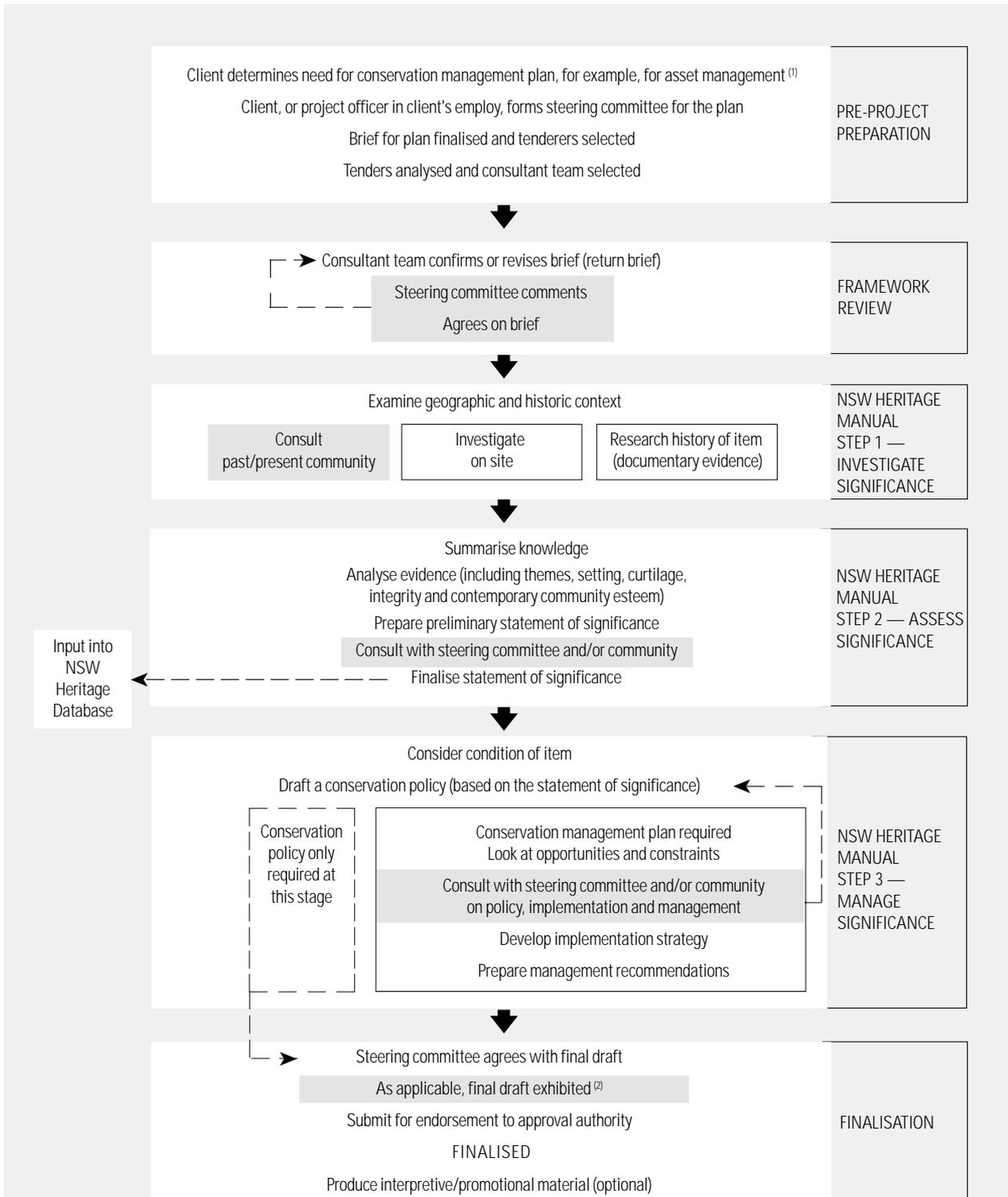
RETURN BRIEF

The head consultant is to provide a return brief outlining the intended approach to the conservation management plan, a work program and any additional matters not covered by this brief. *[Optional.]*

DOCUMENT SUITABLE FOR PUBLICATION

Provide a separate fee to prepare a promotional document that contains information suitable for public use, on the history, significance and conservation of this heritage item. The fee is to include the provision of all diagrams and photographs of a quality and in a format suitable for publication. The document is to be approximately [...] words, with [...] percent illustrations. *[Optional.]*

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FLOW CHART



Note: Public consultation.

(1) In some circumstances, a conservation policy or management plan may be requested.

(2) Exhibition refers to conservation management plans and is at the discretion of the approval authority.



AA Company House, Hamilton, Newcastle was built in the 1840s by the AA Mining Company for its site manager. It was recently rediscovered in the backyard of a suburban house. A conservation management plan for the derelict building recommended preservation policies to prevent further deterioration of the fabric. The house has been purchased by Newcastle City Council.

An inspection of the house by participants in a heritage short course hosted by Newcastle City Council, in July 1995.

Detail. Metal vernacular detailing over the back door.

