

# Protecting Historic Pub Exteriors

## PROTECTING HISTORIC PUB EXTERIORS

### Introduction

Through the work of its Pub Heritage Group, CAMRA has a long history of promoting and protecting our most valued historic pub interiors. The Group's remit does not, however, extend to pub exteriors. Many pubs whose interiors have lost any real heritage importance retain exteriors that are of significant architectural or historic interest; as a Campaign, we should do what we can to preserve them, hence this guidance.

### What Needs Permission?

At the most dramatic end of the scale, any demolition of a pub in England requires planning permission. As we'll see later, should such consent not be obtained then local planning authorities can (and should) take robust action against the perpetrators. In Scotland and Wales, though, demolition permission is only required if the building is listed or in a Conservation Area (CA).

Should a building be statutorily listed or be in a CA, then all but very minor changes to its outside will need Listed Building Consent.

With non-listed buildings, permission isn't necessary for building operations that do not materially affect the external appearance of a building. The term 'materially affect' has no statutory definition so planning officers must make a judgement call about the significance of a proposed change. Generally, works like window replacement and installation of cladding would be allowed.

### What Should be Saved?

There's no simple answer to this question. Pubs come in numerous shapes and sizes and, to some extent, significance is in the eye of the beholder – most of us know an attractive pub when we see one.

However, some pub buildings are clearly a cut above in terms of architectural distinction. In many cases, such pubs will have been listed or be in a CA and thereby afforded a serious degree of protection. Others, though, that don't meet the demanding listing criteria, but are nonetheless precious survivors, can still be saved if threatened by unwanted changes.

Of special importance are pub buildings that are redolent of the time in which they were built. Many late-Victorian pubs, for instance, were designed in exuberant and exotic style with money seemingly no object.

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Between the wars, more rustic architecture became fashionable, with much half-timbering – so-called ‘Brewer’s Tudor’ – but use was also made of the contemporary Art Deco style with distinctive ‘moderne’ pubs springing up. After World War Two, with money short, pub design tended to the plain and functional though, later on, some were built in the brutalist mode and survivors have their adherents. In more recent times, new pubs have become fewer and further between with most being frankly undistinguished in architectural terms.

## What Can be Done?

Should you become aware of the distinguished exterior of a local pub coming under threat of some kind, the first step is to find out if it’s already protected which you can do by visiting this website - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>. You can check if a building is in a CA here - <https://www.conservationareachecker.com/>.

If it’s listed or in a CA, then check whether an application for Listed Building Consent has been made; if it hasn’t then contact both the planning department and, if it has one, the Conservation Officer at the Council.

Should the building not be listed but you think it could/should be, you can apply to Historic England - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/protect-historic-places/apply-for-listing/> Be warned, though, that the assessment process can be lengthy so don’t expect an early answer. However, Councils have the power to serve Building Preservation Notices that provide up to six months protection - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/protect-historic-places/building-preservation-notices-and-certificates-of-immunity/> and it can be worth asking about this.

Councils can be asked to extend a CA if a suitable building lies not far outside an existing Area

Councils can also place buildings on Local Lists of heritage assets. This doesn’t give the building statutory protection but should be a material consideration regarding any planning application affecting the building. Not all Councils have Local Lists but if yours does then an application would be worthwhile.

Where buildings aren’t listed, planning permission may well still be needed for any changes to the outside so, again, check with the Council and alert them to any potential unauthorised developments if need be. Should an application have been submitted then you’ll obviously want to object to it – and, ideally, encourage lots more people to do so. Advice on pub saving campaigns can be found in our comprehensive guide - <https://camra.org.uk/campaign-resources/saving-your-local-pub-13543> (this is the version for England – there are others for Scotland and Wales).

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## What Can Happen?

Councils can (and sometimes do) take enforcement action against breaches of planning control. This can range from ordering restitution of changes made without authorisation to rebuilding demolished buildings brick-by-brick. Some case studies are in the Appendix.

## CAMRA Recognition

For obvious reasons, pubs with distinguished exteriors can only appear on our Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors if the inside is also sufficiently notable. They can, though, be included on the Local Inventories that all Branches are encouraged to compile. More information about this here - <https://camra.org.uk/heritage-pubs/local-inventories-19>

## APPENDIX

### Carlton Tavern, Kilburn, London

The pub was illegally demolished in 2015 by developers CLTX; it was being considered for listing by Historic England at the time. Westminster City Council issued what, at the time, was an unprecedented Enforcement Notice ordering CLTX 'to recreate in facsimile the building as it stood immediately prior to demolition'. CLTX appealed the Notice, but it was upheld after a public inquiry in May 2016. Rebuilding started, albeit slowly, in 2017 and the pub eventually reopened in April 2021.

### Punch Bowl Inn, Hurst Green, Lancashire

Closed in 2012, the Grade II listed pub stood empty before being demolished in June 2021 by Donelan Trading Ltd without the benefit of planning permission. In April 2022, Ribble Valley Council ordered that the pub be rebuilt to its original plan. That December, five people were found guilty of illegal demolition and required to pay a combined £70k in fines and court costs. The deadline for rebuilding, March 2024, passed so further legal proceedings have begun in the High Court seeking an injunction requiring compliance with the Enforcement Notice.

### Montreal Arms, Brighton

Charles Southall bought the pub in early 2022 and soon began ripping the distinctive green tiles from its exterior. The Council quickly issued a Building Preservation Notice, following by an Enforcement Notice requiring replacement of the tiles by the following month. However, after a series of appeals and planning applications, no work has been done. In May 2025, the Council began proceedings against Mr Southall, and the case was due to be heard in August 2025.

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## **Crooked House, Himley, Staffs**

This famous pub was sold on 27 July 2023 to ATE Farms Ltd. On 5 August, fire gutted the interior and badly damaged the structure. On 7 August, the building was demolished. In February 2024, South Staffs Council issued an Enforcement Notice requiring the owners to reinstate the building as it was before demolition; the owners lodged an appeal. In the meantime, the Police had arrested and bailed six people on charges including suspicion of arson. The Planning Inspectorate decided that the appeal could not be heard until after the Police had concluded their investigations – two years on, this shows little sign of progress, though a file has apparently been passed to the CPS.