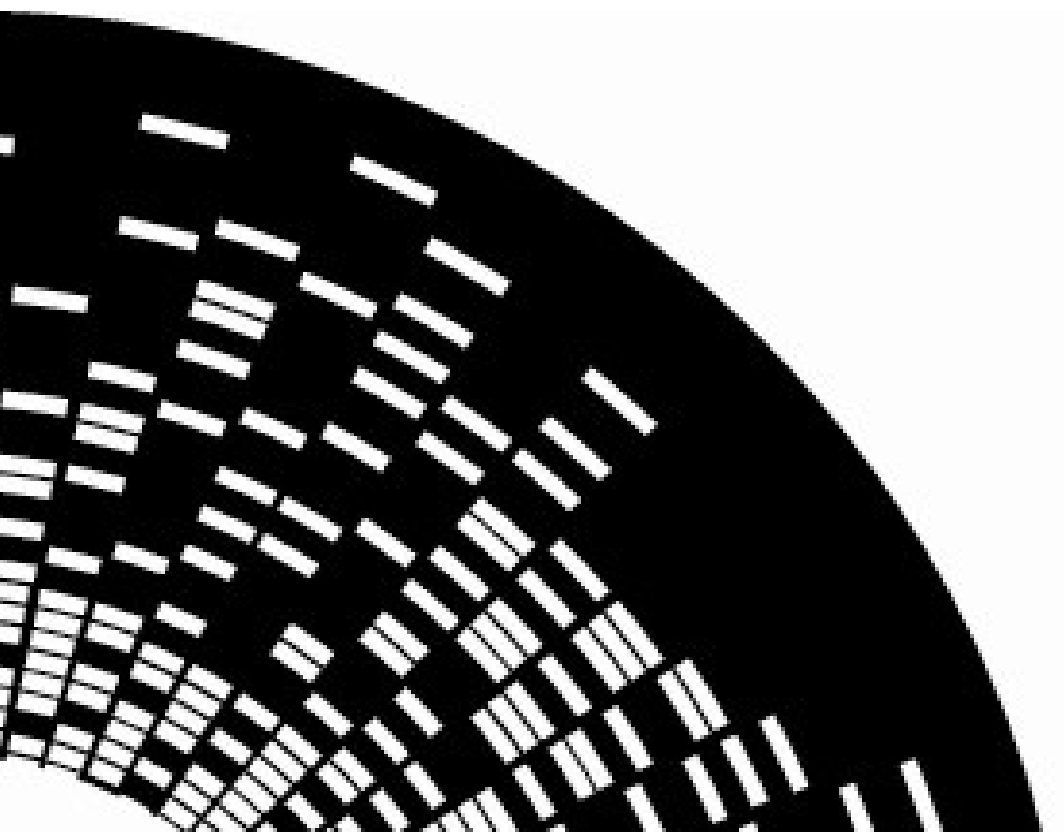




Accreditation

North Hertfordshire Museum

Collections development policy
2018-2023



Name of museum: North Hertfordshire Museum Service, comprising North Hertfordshire Museum, Burymead Resource Centre, and those items stored in the closed Hitchin Museum & Art Gallery and Letchworth Museum & Art Gallery

Name of governing body: North Hertfordshire District Council

Date on which this policy was last approved by governing body: 05/08/2019

Policy review procedure:

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: December 2023

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.

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

I.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

North Hertfordshire Museum aims to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the culture, heritage and environment of North Hertfordshire. We use our collections to tell the stories of the people, past and present, who have lived and worked here. Our vision is to create a welcoming museum that plays an active role in the life of the District.

- I.2. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
- I.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.
- I.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- I.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.
- I.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.
- I.7. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2. History of the collections

The collections of North Hertfordshire Museum are made up of the collections of the old Letchworth Museum and Hitchin Museum, plus objects from the Hertfordshire Yeomanry Collection as well as the Herts. Medical & Pharmaceutical collection, from the Herts. Medical & Pharmaceutical Trust (now administered by the Hitchin Historical Society).

2.1 Letchworth Museum

Letchworth Museum was built in 1914 to house the collections of the Letchworth and District Naturalists' Society, who initially ran and owned the collections. The first honorary and general curator was William Percival Westell (1874-1943), who later became the first paid curator. He was Science master at Caldicott (preparatory) School, Hitchin; honorary curator of Letchworth Museum and Art Gallery (1914-1943) and a well-known author of works on natural history and archaeology. He wrote 84 books and gave 145 radio talks for the BBC, mostly on natural history. He was also known as "Uncle Tadpole" on BBC Radio children's hour. In the 1930s he established one of the country's first museum loan services for schools.

The Letchworth and District Naturalists ran into financial difficulties, and the building and collections were transferred to Letchworth Urban District Council – the building in 1926 and the collections in 1939. The early collections at Letchworth Museum were added to by a variety of collectors and donors, including Mary Hope Greg (1850-1949), Col Marlborough Pryor, J M Bull, W P Westell, Lady Corey, the executors of William Ratcliffe and Margaret Thomas.

In 1972, Letchworth Garden City Corporation bought a house in Norton Way South from Mabel Parker, which had been the offices of Parker and Unwin. The Corporation and the Council planned to work together to turn this building into a museum. By 1973, the building was used for occasional exhibitions. It became the First Garden City Heritage Museum, opening in 1978. It housed and displayed objects and documents relating to the establishment and growth of Letchworth, the world's first Garden City, and to the Garden City movement in general.

Letchworth Urban District Council and Hitchin Urban District Council were absorbed into North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) following Local Government reorganisation in 1974. Both Letchworth and Hitchin Museums came under the management of NHDC. Over the years, there had been good relations between the two museums. Now that they formed a single Museum Service, they were able to strengthen their areas of expertise by combining their collections and staff. A new Natural History Department was formed by amalgamating the Natural History sections of both museums. The two museums' collections were transferred between the museums to reflect the new vision for each area of the service: Hitchin Museum focused on local history and Letchworth Museum on archaeology and Natural History.

The Heritage Museum in Letchworth was extended in 1977 and had an unofficial opening. This was followed in 1978 by an official one to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the founding of the First Garden City. The Heritage Museum came under the control of the Curator of Letchworth Museum, with a Local History Assistant in charge. In the early 1980s, Letchworth Garden City Corporation decided that they wanted to run the Heritage Museum themselves, so the museum was transferred to their control in 1984.

A long-term loan was agreed with North Hertfordshire District Council to allow the Heritage Museum to retain the large collection of objects relating to the founding and development of the Garden City, which had been donated to and collected by the original Letchworth Museum. It was also agreed that the two museums would have very different collecting policies from

then on, to ensure there was no duplication. North Herts Museum Service formally initiated transfer of the items that had been on loan to the Garden City Heritage Foundation (the successor in title to Letchworth Garden City Corporation in the 1990s) in 2018. This is close to completion as of Summer 2019.

2.2 Hitchin Museum & Art Gallery

Hitchin Museum was founded in 1939 by the Hitchin & District Regional Survey Association, in a house built in 1825 for John Kershaw, who ran a Hitchin to London coach service. The building opened in 1939 as a public library; in 1941, the top floor opened as a museum. From 1966, the museum occupied the whole of the old building with the transfer of the library to a new building next door. The museum's main collections covered local and social history, art, costume, pharmacy and militaria, including the collections of the Hertfordshire Yeomanry.

The social history collection related mainly to the lives of Hitchin people, although there is material from around the District. The art collections comprise works by local artists, especially the Quaker brewers Samuel Lucas the Elder (1805-1870), and his son Samuel (1840-1919), with a good collection of etchings by Frederick Griggs. The costume collection of around 4000 items is the largest in Hertfordshire, with a core collection from the 1840s trousseau of Elizabeth Mary Burrowes. The Hertfordshire Yeomanry collection covers the Regiment from its inception as a defence against Napoleonic invasion in 1805 right up until the Second World War, and consists mainly of weapons and uniforms.

The football collection comprises of around 1000 objects and was collected by Vic Wayling, the Secretary of Hitchin Town Football Club. Vic began to collect objects of local, national and international interest in the early 1950s and by 1956 had opened what is believed to be the worlds first football museum. Located originally at Legion House in Hitchin and later at Top Field, home of Hitchin Town Football Club, the collection transferred to NHDC after the death of Vic Wayling in 1976.

The Pharmacy Collection comprises some 2,700 items. It is owned by the Hertfordshire Medical & Pharmaceutical Museum Trust, now under the care of the Hitchin Historical Society, and was established to care for the collection of Vi Lewis, of Messrs Perks & Llewellyn, pharmacists and distillers who had grown and distilled lavender in the town from the 1790s. The furniture and fittings of their shop were installed upstairs at Hitchin Museum, and the main counter has been re-displayed in the North Hertfordshire Museum. The Trust also maintains an attractive Physic Garden outside the former Hitchin Museum.

Both Hitchin and Letchworth Museums closed in 2012, in readiness for the merger and move to the new North Hertfordshire Museum in Hitchin. The ground floor of the new museum opened in October 2017; one of two upper galleries opened in late 2018 and the full opening of the museum took place in July 2019. The North Hertfordshire Museum continues to collect objects to the standards listed In this policy.

3. An overview of current collections

Date range: The collection dates from prehistory into the 21st century.

North Hertfordshire Museums Service holds collections relating to the following subject areas:

- Archaeology (objects, paper and digital archive)
- Decorative Art
- Numismatics
- Costume

- Documents
- Fine Art
- Militaria
- Natural Sciences
- Pharmaceuticals
- Photography
- Local History
- Social History.

Estimated size of collection:

Collection subject areas	Hitchin	Letchworth	Total
Archaeology (registered finds)	0	150,000	150,000
Archaeology (estimate, incl. objects, paper and digital archive)	0	250,000	250,000
Art	2,000	600	2,600
Decorative art (eg ceramics and glass)	200	600	800
Coins	200	5,000	5,200
Costume	4,000	550	4,550
Documents	20,000	0	20,000
Militaria	400	20	420
Football Collection	1000	0	1,000
Natural Sciences (estimate including archive)		349	100,000
Newspaper Collection	300	200	500
Pharmacy (loan in)	2,800	0	2,800
Photography	650,000	100	650,100
Social History	20,000	2,000	22,000
Total			1,209,970
Education Loans Collection			about 3000
Loans to other institutions:			
Loan of Garden City material to Heritage Museum		about 35,000	
Storage			
The Fine and Decorative Art collections, Costume, Photography and Documents are currently stored on site at North Hertfordshire Museum and at the old Letchworth and Hitchin Museum buildings. The Hine and other local paper archive is still on site at Hitchin Museum. The Natural History, Archaeology and Social History collections are stored in an offsite store, the Burymead Resource Centre.			

The Education Department has its own collection of objects suitable for sending to schools and for handling. The majority of these items are not accessioned.

The following collection is on loan to North Hertfordshire Museum: Herts Medical & Pharmaceutical collection, from the Herts Medical & Pharmaceutical Trust.

The following collection is on loan from North Hertfordshire Museum Service to the First Garden City Heritage Museum: architectural drawings, photographs, ephemera, art and social history objects relating to the First Garden City. Although a formal transfer process has begun,

which was ratified in autumn 2018, this is still progressing through formal legal channels and is close to completion as of Summer 2019.

Geographic area: the majority of items in the collections relate in some way to the North Hertfordshire District, in that they were produced, used or collected within the area; however there are a few exceptions. Letchworth Museum does not hold Letchworth material dating to post 1903, apart from Fine Art, as 20th century Letchworth material is held by the First Garden City Heritage Museum. The Natural Sciences collections are almost entirely British, relating to Hertfordshire and specifically North Herts.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

North Hertfordshire Museum collects items made in/used in/found in/made by people from or otherwise reflecting the history and culture primarily of the District of North Hertfordshire.

- i. **Archaeology**
The current collection is particularly strong in the Iron Age and Roman periods. Material from all periods from the district of North Herts should be collected; under planning legislation, North Herts Museum is the official repository for archaeological archives generated through the planning process (i.e. developer-funded fieldwork) throughout the administrative district.
- ii. **Decorative Art**
There is a small collection of 18th to 20th century glass and ceramics collected by Letchworth Museum. Further collections of decorative art will be confined to items produced in or commemorating North Hertfordshire or its people.
- iii. **Numismatics**
Coins found in North Herts district; English coins and tokens of all periods used by people in North Herts district; British service and commemorative medals and British orders from people with a link to North Hertfordshire.
- iv. **Costume and textiles**
Women's, men's, children's and infants' clothes, accessories, jewellery and related ephemera to fill gaps in the collection up to 1980; and from 1980 to establish a contemporary collection. Foreign costume only when having significant association with the North Hertfordshire area. Occupational clothing relating to the trades and industries of North Hertfordshire to fill gaps in the collection.
- v. **Documents**
Documents will generally be referred to HALS. However, written and printed ephemera relating to businesses and social activities within North Herts, in particular the villages may be collected.
- vi. **Fine Art**
Oil paintings, watercolours, drawings, pastels, prints and sculpture representative of artists with a connection with North Hertfordshire or depictions of places or people in North Hertfordshire.
- vii. **Militaria**
Items relating to the Hertfordshire Yeomanry; items related to people with a North Hertfordshire connection who served in the military.

- viii. **Natural Sciences**
As there is currently no permanent curator, collecting will be passive rather than active and limited to important local specimens and voucher specimens of local material. The museum will not collect spirit specimens. The Museum holds the County Herbarium and the botanical collections therefore remain an active area for acquisition of voucher material via the county recorders. An exception is also made for archive material relating to objects already in the natural history collections.
- ix. **Pharmacy**
Passive collection of items related to the Perks and Llewellyn pharmacy only.
- x. **Photography, film, video and audio**
Recordings and images relating to North Herts, particularly the villages and people that are less well represented. Media reflecting the cultural diversity of the District, everyday life and trades. Local and national events and celebrations
- xi. **Social History**
Objects relating to life in the towns and villages in the district and their residents (not otherwise covered by the archaeology collection).
- xii. **Football collection**
Football collecting will have a primary focus in or relating to football activity in the North Herts District. Material of a more national or international focus may be considered for collection where it enhances the existing collection.
- xiii. **Ethnography**
There are a few items of ethnography in the collections, but these items are no longer actively collected.

All potential acquisitions are considered in relation to the criteria set out. Staff must demonstrate that the item or collection has significance and value to the Museum because of its:

- relevance to themes, issues, events and people of importance to North Hertfordshire's past and present, and/or
- relevance to subjects identified in the strategic plan for collecting or programme activity, and/or
- relevance to scholarship or the public understanding of North Hertfordshire's past and present histories and cultures.

The following criteria are also addressed:

Relevance	Does item match the current collecting policy and mission? Would it be more appropriate to another museum's or organisation's collection?
Condition	Has item deteriorated beyond use? Is the object or collection suitable for long term storage and preservation with minimal resource outlay?
Originality or rarity	Is the object or collection unique or relatively rare, a fine example of its type, or not well represented in other museum collections;
Safety	Is item a threat to people or other objects (e.g. through infestation or health and safety concerns)?
Usefulness	Is the item likely to be useful for display or research

Context	Is item unprovenanced (i.e. has insufficient background information to provide a context)?
Ethics	Has item been unethically acquired or are there other ethical concerns surrounding its ownership and use?

Items may be accepted as handling objects or for the Education Department, with the approval of the staff concerned; see *Supporting Collections Policy*.

Collecting relates mainly, although not exclusively, to the North Hertfordshire District Council geographical area.

Future acquisitions will be sought from prehistory to the present.

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.

Responsible, curatorially-motivated disposal takes place as part of a museum's long-term collections policy, in order to increase public benefit derived from museum collections. For detail see Collections Rationalisation Plan 2017-2022.

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):
 - British Schools Museum, Queen Street, Hitchin which focuses on early education, especially that of the Hitchin British School.
 - The Garden City Collection which focuses on Letchworth post 1903 with the creation of Letchworth Garden City.
 - Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies Library (HALS) which holds archives for Hertfordshire.
 - Royston Museum which focuses exclusively on the history of Royston
 - Ashwell Museum which focuses exclusively on the history of Ashwell
 - Baldock Museum which focuses exclusively on the history of Baldock

8 Archival holdings

- 8.1 North Hertfordshire Museum has archival holdings. These fall under several categories, including Archaeological written archives, Natural History written archives and Local History documentary archives.
- 8.2 North Herts Museum is the official repository for archaeological archives generated through the planning process (i.e. developer-funded fieldwork) and so continues to collect archaeological archives.
- 8.3 North Hertfordshire Museum only collects Natural History archives which add to existing collections.
- 8.4 North Hertfordshire Museum collects local archives to collections development policy 4.V.

9 Acquisition

- 9.1 Museum acquisitions are made in line with this collections development policy and by discussion and agreement between the expert museum curatorial team. The final decision on acquisitions is made by the Cultural Services Manager.
- 9.2 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).
- 9.3 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 1 November 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.

10 Human Remains

- 10.1 As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

11 Biological and geological material

- 11.1 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.

12 Archaeological material

- 12.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

- 12.2 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

I3 Exceptions

- 13.1 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.

I4 Spoliation

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

I5 The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

- 15.1 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.
- 15.2 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'.

I6 Disposal procedures

- 16.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.
- 16.2 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.
- 16.3 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.
- 16.4 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.

- 16.5 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.
- 16.6 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.
- 16.7 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.
- 16.8 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).
- 16.9 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.
- 16.10 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
- 16.11 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.
- 16.12 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.

16.13 The museum will not dispose of items by exchange.

Disposal by destruction

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

16.15 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.

16.16 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.

16.17 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.

16.18 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.