



Collections Development Policy

Version number: 1.0
Date: October 2025

Document Information and Approvals

Policy title: Collections Development Policy

Review frequency: 4 Years

Review due date: September 2029

Service owner: Venues & Community Commercial Services

Corporate Plan Theme: Effective Council

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

Document Approvals

Each revision requires the following approvals:

- Non-administrative updates: Strategic Leadership Team / Community and wellbeing Committee.
- Administrative updates: Curator

	Title	Date Approved	Signature
Head of Service	Interim Assistant head of Venue & Community commercial Services		HoS signature
Strategic Leadership Team			CEX signature
Committee	Community and Wellbeing		N/A

Revision History

Version No.	Revision Date	Revisor	Previous Version	Description of Revision

Impact Assessment and Consideration

Assessment Type	Required / Not Required	Date Completed	Impact Assessments and Considerations Comment	Completed By

Finance	Not required			
Legal	Required			
Equality Impact Assessment				
Counter-fraud	Not required			
Health and safety	Not required			
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not Required			
Climate Change	Not required			

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the Organisation

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

The museum service works to promote the understanding of history in Epsom and Ewell Borough Council area by helping and encouraging people to encounter objects and pictures from the past.

Its key aims are:

- To offer visitors an exciting and informative experience in the museum's displays and exhibitions
- To make the museum collections accessible as a resource for the study of local history
- To promote historical awareness in the Borough through activities
- To provide an educational service suited to all stages and abilities

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. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2. History of the Collection

- 2.1. Collecting began on the foundation of the museum in 1969 and has continued uninterrupted ever since, at an average rate of 300 items a year. From the foundation, the broad outlines of policy have remained the same: to preserve a research archive of material for the history of Epsom and Ewell, to collect and display items which will bring that past home vividly to people, and to support specifically local items with others of the same kind which will help illustrate the history of the area.
- 2.2. The town of Epsom and the village of Ewell were small-scale, face-to-face communities until urban development in the 1820s; significant population growth came with suburbanisation in the 1930s. The museum's social history collections are therefore predominantly from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

3. An overview of current collections

- 3.1. The collections of the museum cover the whole geographical area of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and can be considered under four broad headings: Archaeology, Social History, photographs and ephemeral material (actual and digital).
- 3.2. The archaeological collections consist of things which have been found in the ground (or discarded in the structure of buildings) and which are suitable for archaeological interpretation. This material is intended as a reference archive for specialist research, as well as for display
- 3.3. Archaeology is collected from the borough of Epsom and Ewell. In addition, the museum will keep archaeology from the northern part of the Borough of Reigate & Banstead, comprising the historic parishes of Banstead, Chipstead, Kingswood, Walton on the Hill and Woodmansterne. This material is stored at the museum until such time as a local museum with archaeological collections is established for that area.
- 3.4. The collections of paperwork consist of photographs, prints, pictures, postcards, ephemera and pamphlet literature, extending to such items as carved wooden signs and brass plaques. It does not include archives, books or paintings of non-local subjects by local artists. The museum collects items of local relevance which have a particular importance to local history.
- 3.5. Things are said to be of local relevance, when they come from the area administered by the Borough of Epsom and Ewell at incorporation in 1937, irrespective of any boundary changes which have taken place before or since –although as a courtesy for researchers three sites are also included which lie just outside the borders: the Bonesgate pub, the Driftbridge hotel, and Epsom Downs station. Local relevance

covers people (or businesses or social groups) on a visit the area as well as those who live here, but it excludes their activities outside the Borough.

- 3.6. In the case of the Derby and other races at Epsom, local relevance is confined to the Grandstand building, the course, the crowd, the Gypsies, the bookies and the fair. It excludes from consideration the race itself, the horses, the jockeys, the owners and the trainers (except if they happen to be local horses). Activities relating to the Derby but taking place outside of the Borough are not of local interest.
- 3.7. The social history collections consist of objects which are of value in illustrating the domestic, commercial, social and administrative life of Epsom and Ewell BC area.
- 3.8. In addition to the main category of social history, there are specialist collections in this field. Amongst these are local buildings, costume, domestic items, tools, medical equipment, and toys.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

- 4.1. The museum will continue to collect in accordance with the themes listed above.
- 4.2. The museum will only collect objects for which suitable storage and exhibition facilities are available. In particular, the museum has limited storage space for large items and careful consideration must be given to the acquisition of any large object.
- 4.3. The museum will not collect documents, nor will it collect ephemera, photographs or pictorial material when these could more appropriately remain within an archive consisting primarily of documents. All documents relating to Surrey will be forwarded, as a first offer, to the Surrey History Centre.
- 4.4. The museum will not collect objects which pose a threat to the health and safety of staff or visitors, such as toxic or caustic chemicals, explosives and inflammable materials, or guns (unless rendered incapable of use)
- 4.5. The museum will not collect objects of a size or weight likely to cause hazards to Staff in storing, moving and displaying them.
- 4.6. The museum will not collect items so exactly duplicated by items already in the collections as to be of no independent value for research.
- 4.7. The museum will collect contemporary items which reflect current society in the Epsom and Ewell Borough Council area.

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.
- 5.3. Objects from the collections will be considered for disposal on a case-by-case basis under the following criteria:
 - Poor condition

- Duplicates exist
- Falls outside the Collections Development Policy
- Public benefit better served by transfer to another organisation.

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):
- Liaison will be made with the Newmarket Museum of Horse Racing when items relating to the Derby and other local races are being collected.
 - When collecting ephemera, photographs and pictorial material, the museum will co-operate with Bourne Hall Library and the Surrey History Centre.
 - When collecting items of local history with relevance to more than one part of Surrey, the museum will collaborate with others in the county through the Surrey Museums Partnership, and in particular where the items relate to areas which border on the Borough of Epsom and Ewell.
 - The neighbouring parishes are Ashted to the west (covered by the Leatherhead Museum), Chessington and Tolworth to the west and north (covered by the Kingston Museum and Heritage Centre), and Cheam to the east (covered by the Sutton Heritage Centre).
 - Collecting policy for the Victorian suburb of Worcester Park, which lies at the boundary of three authorities, should be jointly agreed by Epsom & Ewell, Sutton and Kingston.
 - The parish of Banstead to the south currently has no museum provision, but decisions as to the appropriate place to receive items from this area should involve consultation with the Banstead Local History Group.
 - Should the museum be offered objects more suited to the collecting policy of other museums, potential donors of this material will be encouraged to make direct contact with these museums; if the object is to be forwarded, this will be done only after obtaining the consent of the museum concerned. The museum may also acquire custody or title to items as part of the process of forwarding them to the most appropriate place. The entry form will allow for this and donors will be made aware of it at the time of entry.

8. Archival Holdings

- 8.1. 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.
- 8.2. Documents will be forwarded to the Surrey History Centre or another appropriate Record Office, while books and leaflets will be forwarded to the Bourne Hall Library or another appropriate library

9. Acquisition

- 9.1. The policy for agreeing acquisitions is: The museum will exercise 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.
- 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
- 9.4. 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.

10. Human remains

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

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 materials

- 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).

13. 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.

14. Spoliation

14.1. 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.

15. 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'.

16. 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 donor 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. 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.
- 16.7. 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)
- 16.8. 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.
- 16.9. 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
- 16.10. Photographic records where practicable in accordance with Spectrum procedure on deaccession and disposal.
- 16.11. 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
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.

17. Disposal by exchange

- 17.1. 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.
- 17.2. 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.
- 17.3. 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.
- 17.4. 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).
- 17.5. 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.

18. Disposal by destruction

- 18.1. If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 18.2. 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.
- 18.3. 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.
- 18.4. 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.
- 18.5. The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history.