Valence House Museum Care and Conservation Policy

Name of museum: Valence House Museum

Name of governing body: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 23 June 2015

Policy review procedure: The Care and Conservation 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: 23 June 2020
1.0 Introduction

1.1 This policy has been written in accordance with the museum’s Statement of Purpose and the Collections Development Policy. All staff have read and agreed to abide by the policy. The Care and Conservation Plan sets out the way the policy will be put into action and should be read in conjunction with the Forward Plan, Emergency & Salvage Plan and any other plans affecting the collection and the museum buildings.

1.2 Conservation is a core function of collections management, and it is inextricably linked with a vast array of other core activities. This policy includes a combination of preventive and remedial conservation measures, designed to ensure long-term preservation. It covers not only preventive and remedial conservation, but also guidelines and standards for storage.

1.3 Preventative conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum objects and specimens and structures.

1.4 Remedial conservation involves a treatment to an object or specimen to bring it to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.

1.5 The purpose of the Care and Conservation Policy is to set a framework for:
- The preservation of the collections and buildings in the care of the museum
- Preventative and remedial conservation of the collections
- The safe use of and access to collections, within the limits of the museum’s resources

2.0 Standards, ethics and legislation

2.1 The museum aims to improve the care and conditions of all its collection in accordance with:
- Benchmarks in Collections Care,
- BS5454/PD5454 ‘Recommendations for storage and exhibition of archival documents’,
- PAS198:2012 ‘Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural Collections’, or other approved standards within the limits of its resources.

2.2 The Museum will comply with the following ethical guidelines or legislation in all aspects of its museum work:
- Museum Association Code of Ethics
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- COSHH Regulations 2002

2.3 The safety and preservation of the collection will be considered from the outset of any plans to alter the displays or storage or modify the buildings.

3.0 Review of the current situation

3.1 The care and conservation of the museum collection is constantly being monitored. Benchmarking has been used as a means to assess the condition and resultant
need to the objects within the museum’s care. A condition survey of the Fanshawe Portrait collection was undertaken in 2005 by a professional painting conservator. These surveys are used to guide the decision making process regarding preservation and conservation. Preservation and conservation is funded through grants and sponsorship.

3.2 A condition survey of the historic building was completed in 2007 by an historic building specialist. This survey directs all remedial work required and the annual programme of works.

4.0 Personnel

4.1 The care of the collections is the responsibility of everyone who works in or visits the museum.

4.2 The museum trains all staff and volunteers who handle the collections in the course of their work. No untrained personnel are allowed to handle items from the collection.

4.3 Researchers or other visitors working with the collections will be briefed on how to handle the items they are working on and will be supervised at all times.

4.4 The museum will consult with a conservation specialist when advice is required on the care and conservation of any object.

4.5 The museum will check the suitability of conservators chosen to work or advise on the collections. A professionally accredited conservator or a conservator listed on the Conservation Register will normally be chosen.

4.6 No item in the collections will be modified or altered until advice has been obtained from a suitably qualified conservator.

4.7 Only suitably trained and qualified conservators will carry out interventive treatment on objects.

4.8 The museum will keep detailed records of all treatments carried out on objects, including the name and contact details of the person or company. These will be recorded on the AdLib Information system.

5.0 The Buildings

5.1 The museum recognises that the maintenance of its buildings is fundamental to the preservation of both the building and collection and endeavours to keep the buildings in a suitable condition. The museum’s collection is stored and displayed in the following buildings. The body responsible for the upkeep of the buildings is listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Used for</th>
<th>Upkeep carried out by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valence House</td>
<td>Display</td>
<td>Heritage Properties manager / LBBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum Store</td>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>Heritage Properties manager / LBBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.0 The Collections

6.1 The museum is aware of the risks to the collection from environmental factors, poor handling, storage and display materials and methods, and of the need to record the condition of the collection. The museum cares for the collections in store, on display and, by setting suitable requirements, on loan.

6.2 The details are listed in the Conservation and Collection Care Plan and include:

- monitoring and improving environmental conditions including temperature, relative humidity, light and dust
- managing the threat from pests
- housekeeping
- conservation cleaning of objects on open display
- documentation of the condition of the collection and of any treatments carried out on objects
- storage materials and methods
- display materials and methods
- transport methods

It is the aim of Valence House Museum to achieve the basic level set by Benchmarking in each of these areas.

6.3 The museum does not contain any working historic items.

7.0 Preventive conservation

7.1 Valence House Museum will display, store, handle and use its collections in such a way as to minimise any risk of damage due to physical, chemical, biological and environmental factors in accordance with best practice guidelines.

7.2 It is the aim of Valence House Museum to achieve best practice for its main collections stores as defined by the recognised guidelines.

7.3 The Museum Curator has overall responsibility for maintaining and updating the storage location guide and general housekeeping duties within the Museum storage facility.

7.4 The condition of the collections is the responsibility of the Museum Curator, who prioritises and plans the remedial conservation programme.

7.5 All displays and stores will be environmentally monitored wherever practical, and a programme of analysis and interpretation of the data will be undertaken. This analysis will form the basis of any further improvement to the preventive conservation programme.

7.6 All display, storage and ancillary areas will be monitored for the presence of pests and a pest management procedure must be followed.

7.7 Access to collections stores is restricted to the relevant curatorial staff. Non-curatorial staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors must be accompanied at all times.
7.8 It is the responsibility of the Museum Curator to ensure that any damage occurring to any object within the collection is properly recorded and remedial action is taken promptly.

7.9 The handling of items is restricted to professional staff, except where express permission has been given by the Museum Curator.

8.0 Remedial conservation

8.1 Valence House Museum conserves its collection and cultural property to the highest possible standard in accordance with the adopted Code of Practice.

8.2 The emphasis of all remedial work is on conservation. Restoration will only be undertaken when it is necessary for the aesthetic, historical or educational interpretation of the item.

8.3 Clear objectives for the remedial conservation of an item will be discussed and agreed between the Museum Curator and the conservation service provider.

8.4 Valence House Museum will endeavour to only employ contractors to work on the historic building fabric who have demonstrated a sensitive and caring approach to historic buildings. All contractors should adhere to the Rules and Regulations for Contractors.

9.0 Reconstruction

9.1 Valence House Museum will reconstruct items or cultural property where appropriate in order to promote or enhance their aesthetic, historical or educational value in accordance with its adopted Code of Practice (see point 11).

9.2 All reconstruction will be based on historical, archival, graphic, pictorial, archaeological and scientific evidence.

9.3 Clear objectives for reconstruction will be discussed and agreed between the Museum Curator and the reconstruction provider.

10. Documentation

10.1 All documentation should refer to the item’s accession number. Under no circumstances should separate conservation numbers be issued.

10.2 The conservation treatment must be fully documented, using photographs, drawings and text. The report must contain full details of all materials used, both the trade name and the chemical composition.

10.3 All reports must include reference to all visual documentation. Detailed reports of analysis where appropriate will be included; the results of which will be attached to the report.
10.4 All records will be entered into AdLib. As a minimum, the records should be referred to on AdLib and cross indexed whilst a hard copy is filed in the secure object documentation file.

11.0 Code of practice

11.1 Valence House Museum has adopted the following code of practice:
- To preserve all original material of historical value whenever possible
- To use reversible materials and treatments whenever possible
- To remove only dirt not considered part of the history of the item
- To remove only obtrusive repairs of non-historical interest
- To maintain working objects according to their operational log
- To arrest and prevent further deterioration of collections whenever practical and possible
- To reveal the aesthetic appearance
- To minimise remedial intervention
- To ensure all treatments comply with the current Health and Safety legislation and COSHH regulations.