

• Foreword¹

Your heritage site has been granted a special status due to its cultural significance – your property is unique! This brochure aims to introduce options and tools to assist in maintaining, restoring or modifying your heritage site. Here, you will find answers to the most frequently asked questions, as well as links to relevant websites and organisations.

Owners or caretakers of heritage sites may encounter several regulations and benefits to protect their cultural property. This does not mean that alterations are impossible, they can be carried out if the historic properties of the site are respected. You may also be eligible for financial provisions to aid in the preservation of your heritage site.

Authorities are also willing to help, and it is important to involve your local council at an early stage. They enforce laws and regulations and advise on the feasibility of your plans. You can always approach them with any questions.

• Overview

The Netherlands has listed almost 150,000 heritage sites that are protected. Besides houses, this number includes churches, castles, farms, mills, parks and archaeological sites. They are significant due to their beauty, cultural-historical, or scientific value. Although heritage sites comprise about 2 per cent of the total number of buildings in the country, they significantly determine the appearance of our landscape. The following provides a brief overview of the relevant types of listed sites.

Nationally listed sites (*rijksmonumenten*)

Nationally listed heritage sites are built cultural property or archaeological sites of national importance and designated for preservation. There are almost 62,000 nationally listed heritage sites and more than 1,400 archaeological sites.

The Cultural Heritage Agency (*Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed*) keeps track of all nationally listed sites in the Netherlands in the National Heritage Register (*Rijksmonumentenregister*). Descriptions include basic information about the heritage site and its location. Owners and caretakers can use this information to understand the scope of their heritage site.

Provincially listed sites (*provincial monumenten*)

Provincially listed sites are built cultural property or archaeological sites that are inscribed on provincial protection registers. The municipality ensures their protection and generally grants permits for the modification of these heritage sites. They are located only in the provinces Noord Holland and Drenthe and number about 800.

¹ In Dutch, listed heritage sites are commonly referred to as monuments (*monumenten*). However, in this publication the terms 'listed sites', 'heritage sites', and 'cultural property' are used interchangeably. These terms encompass built heritage designated as nationally, provincially, or locally listed sites, as well as those belonging to protected townscapes and village views.

Locally listed sites (*gemeentelijke monumenten*)

Local councils protect the cultural heritage within their perimeters. They can designate cultural property as locally listed heritage sites if they are important to the municipality. For example, because they played a role in the municipality's history. Municipalities record locally listed sites themselves. Their number currently stands at 56,000.

Protected townscapes and village views (*beschermde stads- en dorpsgezichten*)

Several towns and village views in the Netherlands are protected by the national government because of their cohesive ensemble value. This may be due to their beauty, the structural cohesion of streets, buildings, greenery and water, or their scientific or cultural-historical value. An overview of the almost 500 nationally protected townscapes and village views can be found on the website of the Cultural Heritage Agency. Additionally, municipalities list their own locally protected townscapes and village views.

Local councils ensure that the historical integrity of these areas is preserved. They do so by recording their protection in Environment and Planning Decrees (*omgevingsplan*). Not all sites within protected townscapes and village views are listed as heritage sites. However, alterations impacting the overall appearance of the designated area may not always be possible.

• Information and advice

Heritage sites are designated by the government due to their heritage values. If you are planning to alter, restore, rebuild, or sometimes just maintain your property you will likely encounter specific laws and regulations to protect those values. The interior and other objects included on the site are protected as well. Most modifications will therefore require a permit, not only for major renovations but also for smaller adjustments. However, it is a misconception that you cannot make any changes to heritage sites. A lot is possible if the heritage values are respected.

Ask your local council!

In most cases, your local council will assist you to ensure that the heritage values of your listed site are preserved. Preliminary consultation with your local council can result in a successful permit application. The Cultural Heritage Agency is legally required to advise your local council in case of major alterations, reconstruction or demolition of heritage sites.

The Environment and Planning Permit

You will need a permit for most alterations to a heritage site. This Environment and Planning Permit (*omgevingsvergunning*) is generally issued by the local council. You might already have considered this if you are planning to alter, restore or rebuild your property. However, you will also need a permit if you are planning smaller alterations, such as painting the exterior a different colour or replacing historic glass. This applies to some regular maintenance work as well.

- **Outdoors.** Are you planning work on an adjacent garden or park, statue, or fence? Then you need a permit. You will also need to apply for one for outbuildings on heritage sites.

- **Indoors.** Are you planning to change your interior? Alterations or maintenance of components with heritage values, such as a stucco ceiling or historic wall coverings, also require a permit.

Be prepared!

It is helpful to be aware of the conditions that make your heritage site special when planning for alterations. This knowledge is important to maintain or alter your heritage site in an appropriate and efficient manner. Additionally, permit applications generally require construction drawings, structural calculations, and photographs.

Specific information about your heritage site can sometimes be found in the National Monument Register. However, this information is often brief. Please contact the Cultural Heritage Agency or your local council if you want to know more about the history of your heritage site and its surroundings.

Information about your heritage site might also be incomplete. A historic survey or technical report could then be necessary, especially if your proposals are substantive or if the conditions of the property require it. Surveys and reports essentially establish the heritage values of your site and document its characteristics. This information should guide your proposals, as some alterations may not be possible if the heritage values are affected. Moreover, these surveys are mandatory for some applications. Advice and support from an expert (such as a specialised structural engineer or architect) can therefore be particularly useful.

The Environment and Planning Portal (*Omgevingsloket*)

To check whether you need a permit, you can visit the (Dutch only) online portal before applying. Permit requirements may differ across the country since municipalities draft their own Environment and Planning Strategies (*omgevingsplan*). Local legislation can therefore be more substantive in some cases. At the portal you can check which rules and agreements apply to your project.

For more information visit: omgevingswet.overheid.nl/checken.

NOTE

Permit applications incur fees, which vary depending on the municipality. These fees are non-refundable, even if your application is rejected. If you decide to withdraw your application, you might receive a partial refund in some cases.

Maintenance period

Preservation of heritage sites require regular maintenance to prevent gradual deterioration of historic materials. Different components of a site have varying timespans for maintenance. For example, paint requires more frequent maintenance than roofing or woodwork. In all cases, the guiding principle will be the preservation of as much historical material as possible to ensure the survival of the heritage values attributed to the site.

Duty of care

Owners or caretakers of heritage sites are legally obliged to keep their property in good condition. This duty involves ensuring that the site is maintained in such a way that the preservation of its heritage values is guaranteed.

Local councils may be forced to act if preservation of the heritage site and/or its heritage values is at risk due to negligence. This may involve requiring you to carry out overdue maintenance (or have it carried out) or the undertaking of legal action, regardless of whether the offense is deliberate or not.

The duty of care is included in the Environment and Planning Act concerning nationally listed sites. However, many municipalities have enacted similar policies for their locally listed sites.

Renovation and sustainability

Ensuring that your heritage site meets sustainability goals is important. This can be achieved by small implementations, at little cost and sometimes even without a permit. For instance, energy-efficient lighting, a properly regulated central heating system and the use of sealing strips can make a significant difference to your comfort. Moreover, energy sufficiency starts with efficient maintenance. It is best to inquire with your local council about the possibilities during preliminary consultation.

- **Financial assistance**

The government encourages the conservation of listed heritage sites. It does so by providing subsidies for the owners or caretakers for maintenance and restoration. Below you will find different subsidies and other financing options you might be applicable for.

Subsidy scheme for the conservation of residential heritage buildings (*woonhuissubsidie*)

This scheme is intended for private owners of nationally listed sites with a residential (housing) purpose. Applications must be made retroactively to the Cultural Heritage Agency, between March 1st and April 30th. It only covers part of the regular costs for maintenance or restoration.

Subsidy scheme for the conservation of heritage sites (*subsidieregeling instandhouding monumenten*)

This scheme is designed for owners or caretakers of nationally listed sites that are **not** classified as residential homes. Applications must be submitted in advance to the Cultural Heritage Agency, between February 1st and March 31st. The scheme covers a period of six years and should be based on a maintenance plan of similar duration.

Subsidy scheme for the repurposing of heritage sites (*herbestemmingsubsidie*)

This scheme is intended for owners or caretakers seeking to repurpose their listed heritage. It applies to nationally, provincially and locally listed sites. Additionally, property that is part of an ensemble may also be eligible. Applications must be submitted with the Cultural Heritage Agency, between October 1st and November 30th.

Investment subsidy for sustainable energy (*investeringssubsidie duurzame energie en energiebesparing/ISDE*)

Owners and caretakers of heritage sites with a residential (housing) purpose may apply if at least some of its components are registered in the National Heritage Register, a provincially listed sites register, or a locally listed sites register. Unlike the subsidies above, applications for this scheme are submitted with the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (*Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland*).

NOTE

Most websites may only be available in Dutch. However, you will be able to reach out to these parties with any requests.

For more information visit: subsidie.cultureelerfgoed.nl or www.rvo.nl.

Other financing options

Low-interest loans

Owners and caretakers of nationally listed buildings can apply for a low-interest mortgage from the Dutch Restoration Fund (*Nationaal Restauratiefonds*), to help finance maintenance and restoration. Favourable financing options may also be available for additional activities.

(Additional) listed sites mortgage

It is sometimes possible to finance preservation or restoration of your property with an additional market-based interest rate loan from the Restoration Fund if the low-interest loan is not enough. Moreover, financing of sustainability and repurposing efforts is also possible in some cases.

Sustainable heritage sites loan (*duurzame monumenten lening*)

When planning alterations to your heritage site, it may also be worth to consider energy-saving and other sustainability measures. These can be financed with a low interest loan, depending on the amount invested in energy saving measures.

NOTE

Low-interest loans for maintenance and restoration from the Restoration Fund can be combined with each other or any other government subsidy. The website of the Restoration Fund provides an overview of financeable measures and the conditions under which a loan is granted. You can only apply for a low-interest loan if work has not yet commenced.

For more information visit: restauratiefonds.nl.

What can your province or municipality do for you?

You may be eligible for a grant or loan from your province or municipality. Provinces receive annual restoration budgets for nationally listed sites from the national government. Additionally, some provinces and municipalities also make funds available themselves. Please inquire with your province and local council about the possibilities.

- **Frequently asked questions**

What is a listed heritage site?

Listed heritage sites are generally considered important due to their beauty, significance for science or cultural-historical value. Your property has been granted special status because of its heritage value on a national, provincial or local level.

Nationally listed sites are designated by the Cultural Heritage Agency on behalf of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. This designation also applies to protected townscapes and village views. Municipalities are responsible for other designations and for implementing heritage policies.

What are heritage values?

Heritage values are the reason why cultural properties have a protected status. They serve as the basis for all alterations to a listed site. It is therefore recommended to establish these values through research.

The National Heritage Register may sometimes contain a description summarising the heritage values of the listed site. However, this is not always the case, and descriptions often do not offer complete summaries. It is important to always check with your local council.

What parts of your heritage site are protected?

The entire immovable property is always protected. This means that all components of the immovable property, including the exterior and interior, are part of the heritage site. Some components may not be listed individually in the register description, as this protection is automatically granted.

A listed site can also consist of several immovable properties, in which case all properties will be protected. These should all be listed separately in the register description.

How do you know if your property is a heritage site?

Heritage sites sometimes have a special appearance. However, it is not always obvious that a property is listed. Hopefully, the previous owner, estate agent or notary has informed you about the special status of your property. This is usually also mentioned in the purchase contract and at the Land Registry (*kadaster*).

If your property is a nationally listed site, it is inscribed in the National Heritage Register. In all other cases you should check with your local council.

How can a heritage site be recognised?

Listed Heritage Signs (*monumentenbord*) mark listed sites in the Netherlands. However, not every heritage site has a sign. These signs can be purchased on a voluntary basis and are available in several variants and sizes. The sign was developed by the Cultural Heritage Agency and produced by the ANWB. You can purchase the sign through them. Some municipalities have also developed their own sign.

For more information, check with your municipality or visit:
anwb.nl/eropuit/monumentenborden.

What changes are permissible?

The heritage values of your listed site serve as the foundation for any proposed alterations. Generally, conservation takes precedence over renovation, and the scope of permissible changes varies for each heritage site. Each site is unique, and proposals typically need to be customised accordingly.

What alterations can be made without a permit?

Minor and routine maintenance tasks that do not alter the material, colour, shape, or detailing of the heritage site may be carried out without a permit. This also applies to significant alterations to components of the property without heritage values.

How long does the decision process take?

Local councils evaluate applications in collaboration with local planning committees. For minor alterations, you can typically expect a response within 8 weeks. However, major alterations, reconstruction or demolition require input from the Cultural Heritage Agency to advise your local council. This extended procedure can take approximately 6 months.

What are the consequences of proceeding without a permit?

Undertaking restoration or remodelling work on your listed site without the necessary permit constitutes a punishable offence and may lead to prosecution. Furthermore, the local council may halt construction and demand the reversal of any unauthorised alterations. In some cases, fines may also be imposed.

- **Support**

NOTE

Most websites may only be available in Dutch. However, you will be able to reach out to these parties with any requests.

Bond van Nederlandse Bouwhistorici

The Bond van Nederlandse Bouwhistorici safeguards the quality of historic surveys and technical reports through quality assurances. Its members are registered experts in historic architecture capable of conducting research according to industry standards.

For more information visit: www.bouwhistorici.nl.

Cultural Heritage Agency (*Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed*)

The Cultural Heritage Agency advises on the preservation, sustainable development and accessibility of cultural heritage within in The Netherlands. It implements laws and regulations in areas like historic preservation, archaeology, historical landscapes and collections. It also produces knowledge for owners, caretakers, private organizations and governments. The Cultural Heritage Agency is part of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

For more information visit: english.cultureelerfgoed.nl.

Dutch Restoration Fund (Nationaal Restauratiefonds)

The Nationaal Restauratiefonds provides information and funding for the preservation of listed sites. It does so independently and on a non-profit basis. They also provide financing for owners and caretakers aimed at maintenance, restoration and preservation of listed sites.

For more information visit: restauratiefonds.nl.

Monumenten.nl

The Nationaal Restauratiefonds also initiated the website 'monumenten.nl'. Here you can find relevant information if you are planning alterations to your listed site, including references to further experts.

For more information visit: www.monumenten.nl.

Monumentenwacht

Each province has heritage inspection teams to provide independent maintenance and autonomous advice. They cooperate with municipalities and conduct periodic building inspections. Contact details for the Monumentenwacht in your province are available on their website.

For more information visit: monumentenwacht.nl.

Stichting Erkende Restauratiekwaliteit Monumentenzorg (ERM)

ERM is a professional network of parties involved in restoration quality. They create guidelines, tools and publications, and share knowledge and experience about maintenance, restoration and preservation of listed sites. ERM also works with owners, designers and executors, and supervisors to ensure quality assurance of maintenance and restoration of listed sites.

For more information visit: stichtingerm.nl/index.

Your local council

The municipality is responsible for enforcing national heritage legislation. Always consult your local council when planning alterations to your listed site. They are able to respond to queries regarding heritage values and everything related to permits. When planning (major) alterations to listed sites, it is recommended to discuss your proposals together to eliminate uncertainties.