

DELAY TO DECAY

FORGOTTEN HERITAGE

MAY 2026

MORE THAN 1,620 HOMES REMAIN UNDELIVERED ACROSS THE SITES IDENTIFIED IN THIS REPORT

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FOREWORD & INTRODUCTION

Across the country, historic buildings of national and local significance are being left vacant, stalled in planning, traded between unsuitable owners, or tied up in prolonged delays that prevent meaningful delivery.

The following examples demonstrate the consequences of delay, uncertainty and failed delivery across a range of heritage assets throughout the country.

Many of these buildings were once active civic institutions, schools, hospitals, halls and landmarks that played an important role within their communities.

Despite their architectural significance and redevelopment potential, they have remained vacant or stalled for years, in some cases decades.

The reasons vary. Sites have been tied up in prolonged planning processes, sold into speculative ownership, passed between developers without delivery, or left without a viable strategy for regeneration. In many cases, the absence of early intervention has allowed relatively manageable issues to escalate into severe structural decline.

The result is a recurring cycle of deterioration.

Vacant buildings become vulnerable to vandalism, weather damage and fire. Roof failures lead to water ingress. Emergency scaffolding, structural bracing and safety fencing become long-term measures rather than temporary solutions. Buildings that could once have been restored become increasingly difficult (and sometimes impossible) to save.

These case studies illustrate not only the physical decline of heritage assets, but also the wider consequences of inaction: the loss of local landmarks, missed opportunities for 1,620 new homes, and the growing financial and social cost of delay.

Together, they present a clear picture of the urgent need for a more proactive and delivery focused approach to heritage regeneration before further buildings are lost beyond repair.



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CONTENTS

CASE STUDIES: STALLED HERITAGE SITES

Ridge Lea Hospital, Lancaster

Fulwood House Hospital, Sheffield

St Thomas Hospital, Stockport

Daedalus Airfield, Gosport

The Lawns, Cottingham

Birkdale School, Southport

Shire Hill Hospital, Glossop

Brimscombe Port, Stroud

Fairoak & The Beeches Villas, Milton

Harold Kidd, Chichester

Royal Marines Museum, Southsea

St Joseph's College, Upholland

Herbert Gray College, Rugby

Kennington Boys School, Lambeth

Compstall Mills, Romiley

Daresbury Hall, Cheshire

Newholme Hospital, Bakewell

Winstanley Hall, Wigan

2016



◀ RIDGE LEA HOSPITAL LANCASTER

- Vendor:
Previously NHS owned, now privately owned
- Grade:
Non-Designated Heritage Asset
- Local Authority:
Lancaster City Council
- Vacant since:
2016
- Current Status:
Previous redevelopment proposals have stalled, leaving the asset vacant and deteriorating
- Potential:
50 homes

2022



2020



◀ FULWOOD HOUSE HOSPITAL SHEFFIELD

- Vendor:
NHS
- Grade:
Non-Designated Heritage Asset
- Local Authority:
Sheffield City Council
- Vacant since:
2020
- Current Status:
Disposal failed to progress,
resulting in vandalism, fire
damage and significant heritage
loss
- Potential:
97 homes

2024



2012



ST THOMAS HOSPITAL STOCKPORT

- Vendor:
Stockport Council
- Grade:
II Listed
- Local Authority:
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
- Vacant since:
2004
- Current Status:
Long-term vacancy has led to structural decline, with no deliverable regeneration strategy secured
- Potential:
100 homes

2025



2020



◀ DAEDALUS AIRFIELD GOSPORT

- Vendor:
Homes England
- Grade:
II Listed
- Local Authority:
Gosport Borough Council
- Vacant since:
2015
- Current Status:
Remains undeveloped despite its heritage significance and housing potential
- Potential:
210 homes

2024



2020



2024



THE LAWNS COTTINGHAM

- Vendor:
University of Hull
- Grade:
II* Listed
- Local Authority:
East Riding of Yorkshire
- Vacant since:
2019
- Current Status:
Disposed of to a private developer. No deliverable regeneration proposal has progressed
- Potential:
300 homes

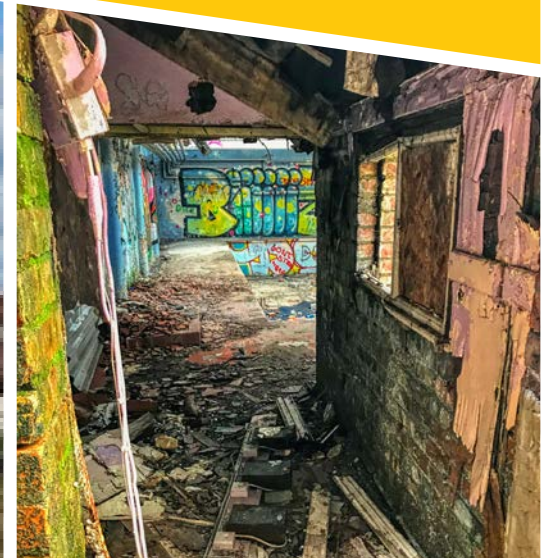
2004



BIRKDALE SCHOOL SOUTHPORT

- Vendor:
Birkdale School
- Grade:
II Listed
- Local Authority:
Sefton Council, Southport
- Vacant since:
2003
- Current Status:
Bought by private owner and went into administration. Prolonged vacancy has resulted in continued deterioration and no meaningful progress
- Potential:
111 homes

2025



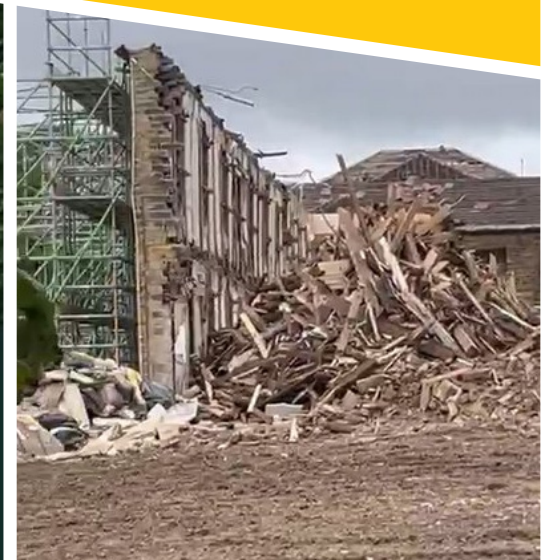
2020



SHIRE HILL HOSPITAL GLOSSOP

- Vendor:
NHS
- Grade:
Non-Designated Heritage Asset
- Local Authority:
High Peak Borough Council
- Vacant since:
2018
- Current Status:
Planning consent granted for developer. Unauthorised demolition has compromised the heritage asset, while redevelopment of the site remains stalled
- Potential:
40 homes

2025



2021



◀ BRIMSCOMBE PORT STROUD

- Vendor:
Stroud District Council
- Grade:
II Listed
- Local Authority:
Stroud District Council
- Vacant since:
2021
- Current Status:
Development partner
withdrawn. Regeneration and
housing delivery remain stalled
- Potential:
200 homes

2012



FAIROAK & THE BEECHES VILLAS MILTON

- Vendor:
Homes England
- Grade:
II Listed
- Local Authority:
Portsmouth City Council
- Vacant since:
2019
- Current Status:
Remarketed following
unsuccessful disposal, with no
delivery solution secured
- Potential:
50 homes

2022



HAROLD KIDD CHICHESTER

- Vendor:
NHS
- Grade:
Non-Designated Heritage Asset
- Local Authority:
Chichester District Council
- Vacant since:
2022
- Current Status:
Proposed acquisition did not complete, leaving the site without a delivery route
- Potential:
47 homes



ROYAL MARINES MUSEUM SOUTHSEA

- Vendor:
Privately owned
- Grade:
II Listed
- Local Authority:
Portsmouth City Council
- Vacant since:
2017
- Current Status:
No implementable regeneration proposal has been delivered



ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE UPHOLLAND

- Vendor:
Privately owned
- Grade:
II Listed
- Local Authority:
West Lancashire Borough,
Upholland Parish
- Vacant since:
1999
- Current Status:
Long-term vacancy continues without a deliverable reuse strategy

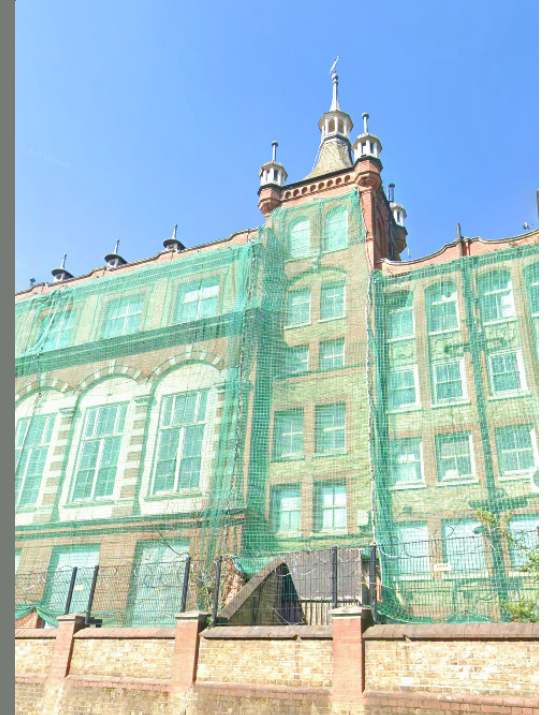
HERBERT GRAY COLLEGE RUGBY

- Vendor:
Privately owned
- Grade:
II Listed
- Local Authority:
Rugby Borough Council
- Vacant since:
2008
- Current Status:
No viable redevelopment proposal has progressed



KENNINGTON BOYS SCHOOL LONDON

- Vendor:
Lambeth Council
- Grade:
II Listed. Historic England's At-Risk Register
- Local Authority:
Lambeth Council
- Vacant since:
2012
- Current Status:
Remains at risk with no implemented regeneration strategy





NEWHOLME HOSPITAL BAKEWELL

- Vendor:
NHS
- Grade:
II Listed
- Local Authority:
Formerly NHS
- Vacant since:
2024
- Current Status:
Vacant and underutilised despite significant housing potential



WINSTANLEY HALL WIGAN

- Vendor:
Privately owned
- Grade:
II Listed. At-Risk Register
- Local Authority:
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council
- Vacant since:
1984
- Current Status:
Severe structural decline demonstrates the consequences of delayed intervention

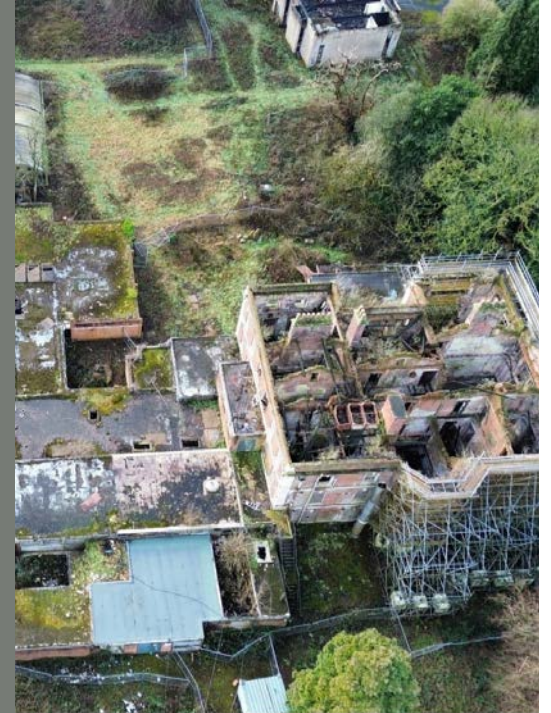
COMPSTALL MILLS ROMILEY

- Vendor:
Private owner
- Grade:
Non-Designated Heritage Asset
- Local Authority:
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
- Vacant since:
1966
- Current Status:
No redevelopment strategy has progressed following closure



DARESBURY HALL CHESHIRE

- Vendor:
No definitive owner
- Grade:
II* Listed
- Local Authority:
Halton Borough Council
- Vacant since:
1990s
- Current Status:
Continues to deteriorate despite its heritage significance and redevelopment potential



THE SUMMARY

**More than 1,620 homes
remain undelivered
across the sites
identified in this report**

The case studies set out in this document demonstrate a clear and recurring national issue: heritage assets with evident housing potential are being held in long-term vacancy while planning uncertainty, ineffective ownership, stalled disposals and the absence of deliverable regeneration strategies allow condition to deteriorate.

These buildings are not simply redundant property assets. Many are former hospitals, schools, civic institutions and landmark buildings that continue to hold architectural, townscape and community value. In planning terms, they represent a significant opportunity to align heritage conservation with the effective use of land, brownfield regeneration and the delivery of much-needed homes.

More than 1,620 homes remain undelivered across the sites identified in this report.

Together, these case studies demonstrate

how prolonged vacancy, stalled regeneration and ineffective stewardship can place heritage assets at increasing risk while constraining housing delivery.

The pattern is consistent: assets are vacated, marketed or transferred without sufficient delivery safeguards; planning processes become prolonged or unresolved; ownership changes without implementation; and temporary protection measures become long-term evidence of managed decline. As deterioration accelerates, the prospects of securing viable reuse diminish, and the public cost of eventual intervention increases.

A more delivery-focused approach is required. Public and private landowners, local planning authorities and heritage bodies should work earlier and more proactively to identify credible routes to reuse, test purchaser capability, secure planning certainty and prioritise proposals that

can demonstrably conserve significance while delivering housing and wider public benefit.

The issue is not whether heritage should be protected or development enabled. The issue is that, without a viable and deliverable future use, heritage protection can become passive, and delay itself becomes the greatest threat to significance.

Forgotten heritage must therefore be treated as both a conservation priority and a housing delivery opportunity.

