



Keats House Care and Conservation Policy 2026

Keats House museum is managed as a registered charity (1053381) by the City of London Corporation, which acts as its sole trustee.

This policy was approved by the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee on DD/MM/YYYY. We will review the policy every five years. The policy will next be reviewed in 2030/31.

Charitable objective

The objective of the Keats House Charity is “to preserve and maintain and restore for the education and benefit of the public the land with the buildings known as Keats House as a museum and live memorial to John Keats and as a literary meeting place and centre”.

Our commitment to collections care and conservation

Keats House first opened as a museum in 1925 and remains dedicated to caring for its buildings and collections, which tell the story of Romantic poet John Keats, his works, legacy and significance today.

We support the Museum Association Code of Ethics statement that we “manage collections for the long-term for the benefit of current and future generations” and work to maintain the ethical, legal and best-practice guidelines relevant to the ownership, stewardship and care of our shared heritage assets.

Through this we play an active role in delivering the ‘Flourishing Public Spaces’ outcome set out in the City of London (CoL) Corporate Plan (2024-2029), and in supporting the CoL Cultural Strategy (2026-2030) priority of positioning the City as ‘A Global Cultural Destination’.

Our definition of collections care and conservation

We define our duty of care for our buildings and collections as comprising both preventive and remedial conservation.

Scope and considerations

The scope of this policy is the buildings and collections at Keats House museum, Hampstead. Our non-displayed collections are stored and cared for by The London Archives (TLA), under their Collections Care and Conservation Policy and associated procedures and plans.

Keats House (Grade I listed) and Ten Keats Grove (Grade II listed) are assets of the Keats House Charity, which is supported by the CoL as its sole trustee. The buildings are maintained by the CoL's City Surveyor's Department, based at Guildhall.

This policy is intended to guide decisions and actions about items from the collection to ensure that they are secure, cared for, and therefore conserved for future generations to learn from and enjoy.

This documentation should be read in conjunction with:

- Keats House Collections Care and Conservation Plan
- Keats House Collections Development Policy
- Keats House Forward Plan, 2026-29 (and beyond)
- Keats House (annual) Activities Plans

- Any other related documents including the Emergency Plan, Keats House Conservation Management Plan and Building Maintenance Plan, and any plans affecting the charity's buildings and collections.

How we plan to deliver this policy:

Preventive conservation

Keats House considers preventive conservation to cover all measures and actions necessary to avoid and minimise future deterioration or loss of museum objects or structures. We will prioritise measures that reduce the need for interventive or remedial conservation. We will deliver this by:

Collection condition monitoring

- ensuring appropriate handling, storage and display practices, including the use of conservation-grade materials and suitable mounts, fixings and supports;
- carrying out regular condition checks on objects, including visual inspection during cleaning and the rotation of displays, and recording any change in conditions;
- in the case of loans to or from the House, ensuring loan agreements are in place and object entry/exit forms and accompanying condition checks are completed;
- ensuring safe transport of objects, including involving trained staff and using appropriate packing methods;
- managing display durations and rotations in line with advice from colleagues at the TLA and Guildhall Art Gallery specialising in conservation.

Environmental conditions monitoring and regulation

- providing and implementing guidelines for appropriate conditions in which to store, handle, display, study and transport objects, including loans (see the Care and Conservation Plan);
- using environmental monitoring to track conditions including temperature, relative humidity and light, and regularly documenting and reviewing this data; and
- actively managing light exposure to prevent damage from fluctuating daylight conditions.

Building management

- preserving the Grade I listed building from which we operate (see the Building Maintenance Plan); and
- working with the CoL's City Surveyor's Department, based at Guildhall, to maintain the buildings.

Housekeeping and pest management

- maintaining high standards of housekeeping, including regular cleaning of the House and conservation cleaning of objects on display; and
- regularly setting and checking pest traps and recording results.

Security

- maintaining secure locks and access controls to protect collections on display;
- maintaining a security alarm system directly linked to a remote monitoring station; and
- using CCTV to monitor all rooms where the collections are on display, as well as all exit points.

Emergency preparedness

- maintaining up-to-date emergency preparedness and response plans and training staff on emergency procedures; and
- maintaining and regularly testing fire detection and alarm systems, and having appropriate fire and response measures in place (see Emergency Plan).

Remedial conservation

Keats House considers remedial conservation to cover the active treatment of an object to stabilise or enhance its condition. We will deliver this by:

- undertaking remedial conservation on objects according to acuteness of need and exhibitions requirements, subject to funding;
- ensuring all such work is undertaken by an appropriately qualified individual, and only after discussions with CoL curatorial officers; and
- documenting, in line with Spectrum standards, the condition of collections and any conservation work taken within the Museum's Collection Management System (CollectionsIndex+).

Working items

The Keats House Collections contain a very small number of working items on display in the House, namely a grandfather clock and an upright piano. The clock is kept in working order by museum staff, and the piano is currently not playable. In both cases, specialist conservators would be called on, only after discussions with CoL curatorial officers, to advise on any specialist conservation requirements. Any actions taken would be recorded within the Museum's Collection Management System (CollectionsIndex+).

Policy review procedure

We will review this policy at least every five years. The policy will next be due for review in 2031.