

HM Land Registry

Deposit your title deeds and help preserve our archival heritage



You are probably reading this leaflet because someone – perhaps your solicitor, mortgage lender or HM Land Registry – considers that the deeds of your property may be of historical value.

What are title deeds?

Before the introduction of land registration, ownership of property was established by producing documentary evidence that the owner and, where necessary, previous owners, had held the land for a prescribed period of time. This means that there is usually a series of conveyances and associated documents, mortgages and wills, for each property known as ‘title deeds’ that show the history of ownership, and often cover a longer period than is needed to prove title.

Why should they be preserved?

Once title to the property in question is registered at HM Land Registry, the old title documents – the so-called ‘pre-registration deeds’ – are usually no longer necessary to prove title. But this does not mean that they have no historical or indeed legal value. Title deeds often contain a mass of information about land ownership and family history and are of particular interest to local historians and genealogists. They are as much part of our heritage as our historic buildings and landscapes.

Why should I consider depositing my title deeds?

By giving or placing on loan the pre-registration deeds with your local record office or other appropriate archive, you will help preserve an important part of our archival heritage. You will also ensure that, in the unlikely event of a query arising with regard to the registered title to your property, the deposited documents are available for inspection.

How do I go about it?

If you would like your pre-registration deeds to be considered for deposit with the appropriate record office, please complete one of the agreement forms printed opposite and send it to your local record office with the deeds. Alternatively, the deeds can simply be taken along to your local authority record office or archive service. You should obtain advice from your solicitor or licensed conveyancer before depositing the deeds to ensure they have no continuing legal value, and in completing the form.

As you can see from the two sections in the form, you should choose between making a gift of the deeds or placing them on loan. Record offices would always prefer to receive deeds by outright gift but placing them on loan is an appropriate course where you feel that you might wish or need to withdraw them at some later time. As the form makes clear, if you make a gift of the deeds, you also consent to the destruction of those deeds which the record office considers to be without research value.

If you need advice in identifying the record office to which the deeds should be sent, or have any other query, you can contact the British Records Association. The National Archives has published on its ARCHON (Archives On Line) website a complete list of local authority record offices and archive services and their addresses.

What happens after I sign the consent form?

The record office receiving your deeds will appraise them carefully and, in order to save valuable storage space, may want to dispose of any documents within the deeds bundle considered to be without research value. The method of disposal will depend on which consent form you have used. If you have placed the deeds on loan, the record office will return to you the documents it does not wish to retain. If you have made an outright gift of the deeds, those documents will be destroyed.

If you would like any title deeds that the record office does not wish to retain to be returned to you, please delete section 2 of part B of the Agreement.

Useful Contacts

The British Records Association
c/o Finsbury Library
245 Johns Street
London EC1V 4NB
Tel: 020 7833 0428
Fax: 020 7833 0416
Email:
info@britishrecordsassociation.org.uk
www.britishrecordsassociation.org.uk

HM Land Registry
Trafalgar House
1 Bedford Park
Croydon CR0 2AQ
www.gov.uk/land-registry

Law Society of England and Wales The
Law Society's Hall
113 Chancery Lane
London WC2A 1PL
Tel: 020 7242 1222
Fax: 020 7831 0344
www.lawsociety.org.uk

The Archives & Records Association
The Keep
Creech Castle
Taunton
Somerset TA1 2DX
Tel: 01823 327 077
Email: ara@archives.org.uk
www.archives.org.uk

This guidance has been produced by a working party which included representatives of the Law Society, HM Land Registry, the Archives & Records Association and the British Records Association.

Forms of agreement for deposit of Title Deeds

A. Form of agreement for deposit of Title Deeds – Loan

- 1 We/I, _____ of _____
place on loan the deeds and documents of title in respect
of _____ with the _____ Record Office.
- 2 We/I request that any deeds not considered appropriate for retention following appraisal are returned to me/us at the address shown above.
- 3 We/I request that you supply me/us with details of the reference/accession number allocated to the documents deposited with you.

First Depositor _____

Second Depositor _____

or*

B. Form of Agreement for deposit of Title Deeds – Outright Gift

- 1 We/I, _____ of _____
give the deeds and documents of title in respect of _____ to
the _____ Record Office.
- 2 We/I consent to the destruction of any deeds or documents not considered appropriate for retention following appraisal.
- 3 We/I request that you supply me/us with details of the reference/accession number allocated to the documents given to you.

First Donor _____

Second Donor _____

*please delete one of the two alternatives