



# WINDOWS AND DOORS IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS

a guide for owners and occupiers for listed buildings and conservation areas



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▲ Georgian door with cast iron fanlight above.



▲ Traditional bay window with sashes.

## Windows

Windows and doorways have a significant impact upon the character and appearance of any building through their form, scale and detailing. When the original windows or doors of a historic building are altered or removed an important element of the building's history is lost and the original character of the property is compromised.

This is extremely important not only with regards to Listed Buildings but to all historic buildings, notably those within Conservation Areas. As a local planning authority we have a duty to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of historic buildings and their setting.

This guidance note provides advice on windows and doorways in historic buildings and outlines when permission is required for repair and/or replacement, what will be acceptable and what plans and drawings are required to submit an application.



▲ A consistent approach to windows in a terrace can help preserve its visual integrity and enhance the value of properties. These are unlisted buildings in the conservation area in Brampton.

## Is planning permission required?

**Listed Buildings:** If your property is Listed then you will require consent to replace or alter the windows or doors. Listed Building Consent is required for any alterations that would affect the building's character and form. Any alterations to the original design, materials, glazing or opening methods will require consent.

**Conservation Areas:** In Conservation Areas planning permission will not normally be required for the replacement of windows in a single dwelling house. Planning Permission will however be required for proposals relating to flats and commercial properties as well properties situated within particularly sensitive areas such as Article 4 Areas (Stanwix Conservation Area).

If you live in a Conservation Area but your property is not listed, you are encouraged to consider this guidance in order to preserve the character and appearance of your property and its setting for future generations to enjoy.

If you are in any doubt as to whether you require permission please contact Planning Services to discuss your proposals.



▲ New timber vertical sliding sash window with dimensions to match the original joinery.

## Should windows be repaired or replaced?

Traditional windows and doors should always be repaired and retained wherever possible as they represent a finite resource of historic material that when lost cannot be replaced. Replacement should always be a last resort and will only be considered acceptable if the original windows/doors have deteriorated beyond practicable economic repair. If the building is listed, neglect of basic maintenance will not justify replacement.

In many cases window replacement is sought to increase insulation and reduce heat loss. In these instances it is often more cost effective to fit weather strips to combat draughts and also increase noise insulation, ease rattling and improve the operation of the windows. In instances when this is not sufficient, secondary double glazing in a removable inner frame may be appropriate. No consent is required for this.

## What will be acceptable for a replacement?

If the traditional windows are beyond economic repair then like-for-like replacement may be acceptable. Replacement windows should preserve the character of the building. In such instances, the original design should normally be reproduced as closely as possible including details such as:

- overall design and appearance (i.e. casement/sash, horns, number and scale of glass panels)
- frame moulding
- glazing bar profile
- method of opening, hanging and fixing

- position within the opening i.e. window frames should not be brought flush with the opening if they were originally designed to be recessed

**Materials & Finishes:** Window frames should be high quality, joinery grade timber. All external joinery should usually be painted with an appropriate joinery paint system.

**Glazing:** All original glass should be carefully removed and retained for re-use where possible. Replacement with modern sheet glass will materially alter the appearance of the window and will not be acceptable. In a listed building where the original glass can not be reused horticultural glass can be used in replacement sashes and casements as it displays some of the imperfections found in old glass which gives the glass its unique character. Glazing should be held in place externally using putty rather than beads.



▲ Fanlight over door in Victorian terrace, Portland Square.

**Glazing Bars:** Glazing bars traditionally formed a key part of the structural integrity of the window. False glazing bars applied to the window is usually very unconvincing and should generally be avoided in any window or door installation.

**Ironmongery:** In Listed buildings, the ironmongery may form part of the character of the door or window and is expected to be retained.



▲A sash window is designed to be easily removed for painting/maintenance.

## What materials should be avoided and why?

The use of the following materials should be avoided for the replacement of windows on historic buildings:

**PVCu:** PVCu is not a traditional vernacular material and current design quality makes its installation unacceptable in listed buildings. Some PVCu designs make an acceptable approximation of traditional sash windows and can be acceptable in conservation areas where buildings are neither Listed nor protected by an Article 4 direction, in preference to more poorly designed PVCu alternatives. A well-designed PVCu window is shown on page opposite and has a far better appearance than many PVCu windows installed in recent years.

**Metal:** The appearance of modern metal aluminium or steel windows generally makes it inappropriate for use in Listed or

traditional buildings. However, many 20th century buildings may be built with metal framed windows e.g. by Crittall, and the history of metal windows extends to blacksmith produced wrought iron medieval windows, and in later centuries, cast-iron casements. These were used extensively in the 18th and 19th centuries in domestic, commercial and industrial buildings.

**Mass-produced timber windows:** Factory standard timber windows can often show little regard for the subtleties that give traditional windows their character and architectural interest and are usually inappropriate in Listed or historic buildings.

## Doors

Like windows, doors and other joinery items is likely to contribute to the significance and value of historic buildings. Loss of these items and inappropriate replacement can mar their quality significantly.



▲ 'PVCu sash window that might be considered suitable for unlisted traditional properties'

## What will be acceptable?

If a building is Listed the listing protects all integral fixtures including joinery, moldings, architraves and interior and exterior doors. Few items will be genuinely beyond practical repair if basic maintenance is carried out. If items are beyond repair the replacement must preserve the character of the building. In such

instances, the original design should normally be reproduced exactly.

**Materials & Finishes:** Doors should be constructed from an appropriate timber such as joinery grade pine or oak, and will normally be painted. Many paint manufacturers now produce ranges of heritage colours which may be suitable.

**Fanlights & Glazing:** Glazed features often form part of the design of historic doorways. If such features exist they should be removed carefully and, where-ever possible, re-used in the replacement door.

**Door Fixtures:** Original door furniture (knockers, door knobs, letterboxes etc) should be retained and re-used where possible. Replacement, where necessary, should match the original materials, detailing and positions as closely as possible.

## What should be avoided and why?

The use of the following materials should be avoided for the replacement of doors on historic buildings:



▲ Plastic doors and windows of a design alien to the original terrace. The ubiquitous 'mock Georgian' fanlight design.

**PVCu/aluminium:** Such materials are not traditional and are out of keeping with the character of historic buildings.

**Mass-produced doors:** Factory standard doors are generally not acceptable for historic buildings and may be

detrimental to the character and architectural interest of the building.

**Glazing:** 'Mock historic' glazing details should be avoided e.g. integral fanlights as these are historically inaccurate.

**Blocking Up Doors:** The blocking up of existing doorways should be avoided. Redundant doors should normally remain in situ and fixed closed in a manner which is reversible.

**Converting Doors to Windows:** The conversion of doors to windows is difficult to achieve without disturbing the architectural character of a building and should usually only be considered in subsidiary locations.

## What plans and drawings are required to submit an application?

In order to assess your proposals we will require the following to be submitted along with your application form:

- Location plan to a scale of 1:2500 or 1:1250
- Site plan of 1:100, 1:200 or 1:500
- Existing elevation drawings to a scale of 1:50 or 1:100 clearly identifying the windows which will be affected by the proposals
- Proposed elevation drawings to a scale of 1:50 or 1:100



- Elevations of proposed windows to a scale of 1:20
  - Vertical and horizontal sections to a scale of no less than 1:20
  - Detailed drawings of joinery and decorative details to a scale of 1:1
- It may also be useful to include photographs of the existing building and the windows which will be affected by the proposals.

## Quick Checklist

- 1.** Do I need permission? If your property is Listed or covered by an Article 4 Direction or is a flat or commercial property within a Conservation Area then you will require permission for any alterations to your windows.
- 2.** Is it possible to repair the windows rather than replace them? Repair is always preferable as it is the most effective means of preserving the historic fabric of the building. It is usually the most cost effective solution as well.
- 3.** Have I submitted the necessary drawings and plans to an appropriate scale? Guidance on preparing an application is provided on page 11. Your application can not be assessed without this information.

If you live in a historic building within a Conservation Area that is not Listed or covered by an Article 4 Direction we recommend you follow this guidance in order to preserve the character and appearance of your property and its setting.

Replacement windows and doors need to comply with the building regulations, the installer should either submit a competent person scheme notification or a building regulation application will be required.

## Need further advice?

Copies of the statutory list for Carlisle are available at

[www.carlisle.gov.uk](http://www.carlisle.gov.uk)

For advice on listed building consent call us on **01228 817000**.