



Listed Buildings – Advice for Prospective Purchasers

This document contains some basic advice and guidance and has been prepared in response to the many enquires received by the Planning Department regarding listed buildings currently offered for sale.

There are approximately 500,000 listed buildings in England. There are three grades, being grade I, grade II* and grade II. All grades of listed buildings are covered by the same legislation which protects the fabric (what it is built of, both internally and externally), interior (any features of historic interest) and their settings. This means that all alterations which affect the character of the listed building will require the benefit of listed building consent. Undertaking works without listed building consent is a criminal offence. Some works of repair can also require listed building consent, especially where replacement is proposed.

For example, when considering window repairs, retention of historic fabric is preferable to replacement. Windows can usually be repaired and even if this costs more to undertake is still a requirement over and above replacement. Likewise, double glazed replacements are not acceptable. Part L Building Regulations takes full account of listed buildings and allows for single glazed windows to be retained or to be replaced on a like for like basis (subject to Listed Building Consent in addition to Building Control approval).

The same applies to all other repairs, which are to be undertaken on a like for like basis, for example, ceilings of lath and lime plaster must be repaired using riven laths and lime plaster and not be replaced with plaster board and gypsum plaster. Wholesale repointing for cosmetic purposes is also unnecessary. Mortar must be cement free.

The removal of a staircase is deemed to be partial demolition, as is the removal of a floor or roof structure, or alterations to remove load bearing walls (either in part or in whole). Such applications require the approval of the Secretary of State; English Heritage is a statutory consultee in this process.

With regard to alterations, the legislation which protects buildings states there is a presumption in favour of preservation. Alterations are usually limited in scope, given the legislation, but it is sometimes possible to accommodate some sympathetic changes. Each building is considered on its own merits and extensions and/or alterations are not always appropriate.

We would strongly advise that if you are considering buying a listed building that you carefully consider whether the building meets with your needs both now and in the

foreseeable term. Drastic changes to the building are unlikely to receive support from the Local Authority.

You should also note that the legislation that protects the house is also extended to outbuildings, and other structures built before 1948. Fixtures, such as walls, fences, garden gates, etc attached to the building are also covered by the same legislation.

The Council's Conservation Officer would be happy to offer more detailed advice on any specific proposals that you may have but an appointment would be required. Plans of the building, however basic, are also required to facilitate discussion of proposals.

It is highly recommended that surveys are undertaken by professionals who have a sound knowledge and experience in surveying historic buildings to ensure that any repairs or remedial works are in accordance with the legislation that protects listed buildings. Architects, surveyors and engineers who have sufficient experience to advise on listed buildings will be members of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and/or will be conservation accredited practitioners of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) or the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). Contact details are set out below:

IHBC – www.ihbc.org.uk

RIBA – www.architecture.com

RICS

<http://www.rics.org/AboutRICS/RICSforums/RICSBuildingConservationForum/RICSBuildingConservationForumaccreditation/accreditedlist.htm>

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