



Your property owner's guide
to maintenance & repair

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Why you need to read this guide

You chose to own a character home for a reason. They have more history, features and personality than standard construction houses. They also require more specialist maintenance and repair. This isn't something you do just for the love of your home; it can also affect your insurance.

Not maintaining or repairing your listed or thatched home in the right way, makes it more likely for you to need to make a claim and less likely that your insurer will pay up.

By the end of this guide, you'll be able to:

- ✓ Understand your responsibilities as a character homeowner
- ✓ Understand how maintenance & repair affects your insurance
- ✓ Be aware of the processes and procedures when maintaining and repairing a listed property
- ✓ Find organisations that can help you get the job done properly



Introduction

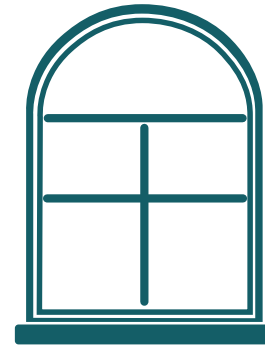
Owning a listed or historic building comes with a great deal of responsibility, you can save yourself time, money and stress by understanding who to contact about what and when.

As the owner of a listed building (or perhaps you are thinking of buying one), you will be taking on the responsibility of looking after part of the nations heritage.

Of course there is no statutory duty to improve the property, but you will not be allowed to permit the building to fall below the condition it was in when it came into your possession.

Having photographic evidence of the condition of your building upon purchase is a good record to keep.

Video footage is even better still.



Understanding how your property has been maintained in the past helps you maintain it in the future. Talking to neighbours or visiting your local library are great places to start. You may be able to find a local history book with old photographs.



Listed building consent

Listed building consent will be required if a repair to the listed building would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest.

Many repairs will not affect the character of the building but repairs using like-for-like materials may still require consent. Such repairs may still affect the special interest of the building; for example, the removed materials themselves could hold historic interest. The local council should be able to give you information about the history of your property.

Questions to ask could include;

- How has your building changed over the course of its life?
- Have there been any changes to the location and grounds?
- How does your building compare with similar ones in the area?
- Are there any structural deformations in your property?

Finding out this information will give you an idea of what work has been done in the past, how it was done and when it was completed. This will give you some indication of what you might need to do in the future.

Can I get a grant for repairs to a listed building?

In exceptional cases, grants may be available from Historic England for repairs to listed buildings. Historic England grants are usually only available for urgent repairs or other work which would prevent loss or damage. Grants can only be offered if your project involves a certain type of historic property - for example Grade I or Grade II* listed buildings (although in London certain categories of Grade II listed buildings can be considered). Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) may also give grants to owners of listed buildings but their schemes will vary.



If in doubt, the Local Planning Authority should be contacted for advice.



Caring for your listed building: Maintenance

Listed properties need love and attention and regular inspection and maintenance checks are essential if costly bills are to be avoided. Water damage is the biggest enemy and you must make sure that the whole building is watertight as this will help to prevent damage.

“ Try getting into the habit of giving your building a weekly inspection ”

Make sure that your gutters and down pipes are correctly aligned and always free from leaves, which can almost be a daily task during certain months of the year. Leaky waste water pipes can cause damage to weather boarding or timber frames or worse can loosen masonry and mortar which can have serious consequences in historic or listed buildings.

If your property has earth based walls, cob or wattle & daub, water can be an even bigger problem and penetration can cause substantial damage to the fabric of the building. Trailing ivy can look pretty but it can help keep walls damp and disguise problems which if left unattended can cause severe damage.

Poor construction also leads to building failure and decay. However, poor construction is not a term that should be used lightly to describe buildings that have often stood for in excess of 400 years. They may have been built with dubious techniques by today's standards but anything that has stood the test of time over many centuries certainly deserves respect.

It is more likely that if a building is in poor condition, it has been neglected by previous owners. A gradual degradation happens over time unless a building is regularly inspected and carefully maintained.



Caring for your listed building: External check list

External checks

- **Roof:**
Broken, dislodged or missing tiles/
the flashing or trim still intact/signs
for leaks in the loft
- **Walls:**
Any visible cracks or signs of damp
- **Chimney:**
The masonry
- **Guttering & downpipes:**
Are intact & clear
- **Windows:**
No signs of rot, paint intact
- **Oil/Septic tanks**
Check for wear & tear
- **Outbuildings**



Try getting into the habit of giving your building a weekly inspection, keep a log and write down all works that need to be done.



Caring for your listed building: Repair

Any damage to your home will have to be repaired in a sensitive fashion using the appropriate materials and techniques. Features should be repaired rather than replaced to help preserve as much of the original structure as possible and any repair work should be undertaken after an expert opinion has been sought.

Keeping your building in top condition will cost you more than for a modern building and will receive more attention from the local authority. If you neglect your responsibility to maintain your building, you could find yourself on the receiving end of a repairs notice by the local council.

This is not a matter to treat lightly, if you continue to fail to meet their demands, you could find they apply to the secretary of state to have your property repossessed. If the building is unoccupied and in need of urgent work, you may find that the council carries out the work and will then come to you for reimbursement of their expenses.

Many owners are confused as to what is termed essential maintenance or what type of work will actually require listed building consent. In simple terms, listed building consent is required for any work that will affect its value for listing purposes. 'Value for Listed purposes' means what makes the property listed and the age/character of the property. Anything that would affect this would need consent. This will almost definitely be the case for any major works and may be required for minor work, maintenance or repair.

We suggest that you always consult with your local authority before you undertake any work. It is doubtful if the local council could stop you affecting temporary emergency repairs to the property if it means the repairs prevent further damage to the structure. Changes of use of the building should also be broached with the council prior to activation.



Caring for your listed building: Building works

Applications to the local council are fairly similar to normal planning applications and they will be able to supply you with the appropriate form if you give them a call.

You will have to supply supporting documentation such as a site plan, a full description of the works and your views on how they would affect the listing along with a set of drawings showing the before and after position including elevations. Of course for any major works, you will be expected to supply plans from an architect.

Your application will be considered in the normal way by the planning committee and you will have the normal rights of appeal. If you are forced to go to appeal, you have three months in which to submit all requested documentation.

Not all important buildings are listed, some are located in conservation areas, these are areas that are designated of special historical interest and character - certainly if your building is located within one, you may need permissions to carry out any maintenance or alterations.

These areas are not required to be mentioned on statutory lists but by setting them up, local councils gain a measure of control of what actually happens in these areas and any proposal you make will be taken into consideration for the location and area of the property.



For any major works, you will be expected to supply plans from an architect.



Your property owner's guide to maintenance & repair

Maintaining interior features & managing common issues

Nearly every listed building retains at least some original interior features and finishes, such as fireplaces and plaster work. These are integral to the historic interest and character of the building and should therefore be retained.

Traditional wooden floorboards, staircases, wall panelling, and original decorative features such as cornices, are all protected by listing.

If cornices are damaged, or floorboards in need of replacement, the work should be carried out in a sensitive manner, preserving as much of the original fabric as possible and replacing with like-for-like materials only where the original is beyond repair.



Damp

Damp is one of the most common problems encountered in historic buildings but it is rarely a problem that can't be remedied. You should check the obvious causes such as faulty overflows, blocked or broken gutters and downpipes if you find damp patches.

We would also advise property owners to check that external ground levels are not too high or sloping towards the building.

Modern buildings are constructed with cement mortar and two skins of brickwork to create a cavity across which water cannot pass. Most older buildings are built of solid walls using lime mortar. Unlike modern building materials, which are hard and impervious, traditional building materials are soft and

porous; they allow moisture to enter which then evaporates into the atmosphere - 'breathing' or 'breathable construction'. Many cases of damp can be directly attributed to alterations carried out using inappropriate materials which reduce the building's ability to 'breathe' so moisture gets trapped within the walls.

“Damp is one of the most common problems encountered in historic buildings...”

It is really important when addressing any damp issues, that any company, contractor or surveyor that you employ understands listed buildings otherwise they could cause harm to the building by introducing inappropriate solutions.



Property owners should check that external ground levels are not too high or sloping towards the building. If the ground is higher than the house the water will seep in and if the ground is sloping towards the building then water will gather at the bottom of the slope and seep in.



Double Glazing

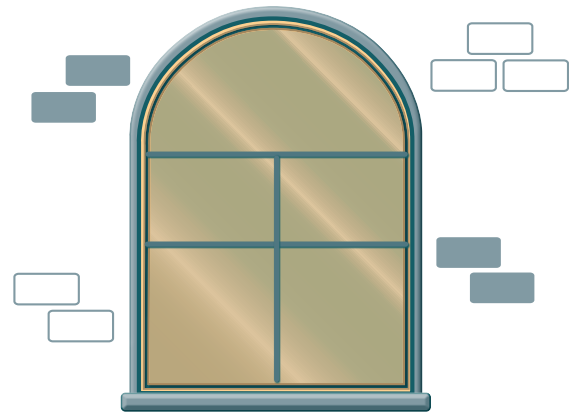
Windows can establish the character of a house. In a listed property, they are also often part of the historic fabric of the building and efforts should therefore be made to preserve them.

The introduction of double glazing into historically significant windows is fraught with difficulty. Even 'slim' double-glazed units may require the loss of historic glass and will not fit within the narrow glazing bars of many traditional windows.

Changing windows classifies as changing the character of a building, therefore listed building consent is required.

Most local planning authorities will resist double glazing in historically significant windows but may be more relaxed if

the windows in question are less significant such as may be the case in modern replacement windows.



Secondary glazing, defined as new glazing fixed to the inside of the original frame, is often preferred as it has little or no effect on the historic window frame. This is the method often recommended by Historic England.



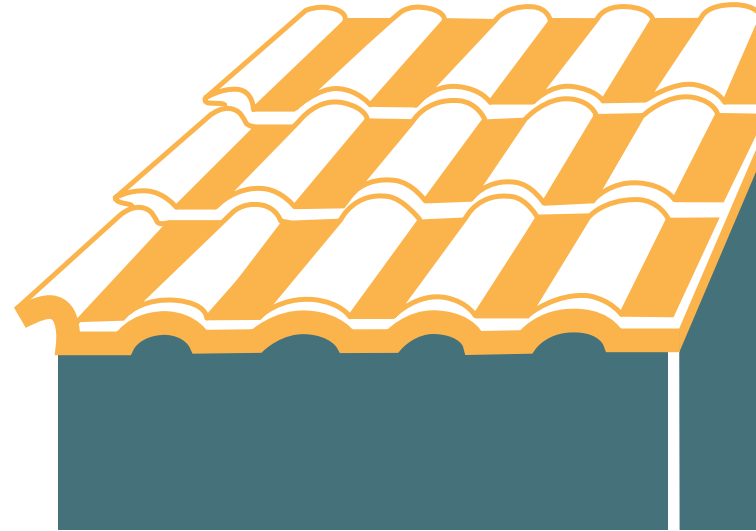
Maintaining exterior features & managing common issues

Roofs & chimneys

Roofs have a functional and aesthetic purpose. For listed buildings they are also an expression of local vernacular materials, geographical location and architectural style. Whether thatched, clay tiled, or slate, the roof of your listed property is important to keep your home in good order.

When repairs become necessary, try to source the best tiles or slates to accurately match the size, colour and texture of the original roofing material. Good roofing contractors will often be able to help as they often hold stockpiles of local roofing materials. The choice of whether to use reclaimed or new slates/tiles will require careful consideration.

Important choices often need to be made about whether to repair a roof or to strip it and re-cover the whole roof.



With listed buildings it is always best to repair rather than replace if it is practical to do so.



Roofs & chimneys

For owners of thatched properties, maintenance plans are different. Due to the process of natural degradation, thatched roofs require more regular maintenance and repair. Ridges in particular need to be replaced periodically and expert advice should be taken on when more radical repairs are required.

Chimneys are often significant features of listed buildings but they are exposed to the extremes of the weather as well as to deterioration from flue gases from inside. They should be checked periodically for structural soundness and for the condition of their pointing, flashings and flaunching. Flues that are still actively used may need to be checked internally or lined in some circumstances.



Chimneys are often significant features of listed buildings but they are exposed to the extremes of the weather as well as deterioration from flue gases from inside.



Guttering & drainpipes

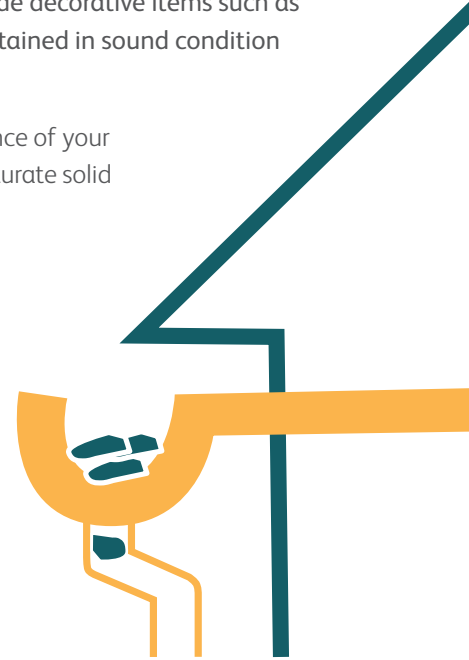
Original lead and cast iron rainwater items survive on many listed buildings and often include decorative items such as dated rainwater hoppers. They can be both decorative and functional and need to be maintained in sound condition in order to prevent rapid deterioration and decay.

The maintenance of properly functioning rainwater goods is essential to the overall maintenance of your heritage property. Unless rainwater is carried away efficiently by guttering, it will eventually saturate solid walls which can give rise to serious structural problems.



For additional information, you can visit:

- **The Listed Property Owners' Club: www.lpoc.co.uk**
- **Historic England: www.historicengland.org.uk**
- **British Listed Buildings: www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk**





For more information, please visit our Heritage Advice Zone:

www.lloydwhyte.com/heritageadvice

If you are unable to access our additional information & guides online, please contact our team on the number below and we will be happy to supply them in other formats.

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