

Inappropriate materials and design

The fashion for replacement windows in uPVC and aluminium in many instances has eroded the character and appearance of historic buildings. The pattern of glazing bars, colour and material are all critical to the integrity and appearance of historic buildings.

Some companies now produce narrow section uPVC sash windows, although more often than not uPVC windows have much thicker sections than timber and the method of opening is normally different. The uPVC material often looks incongruous within historic elevations.

Aluminium normally has different sections to timber and often unpainted subframes are used. The silver aluminium finish is inappropriate for historic buildings.

For listed buildings replacing painted timber windows with aluminium or uPVC will always be resisted. For non-listed buildings in conservation areas sometimes uPVC or colour coated aluminium windows may be acceptable if the design and style matches the original.

Reducing or enlarging openings to facilitate the installation of "standard" windows should be avoided. The entire balance and proportions of a building can be harmed by such alterations.

Windows in Historic Buildings

Conservation and planning advice

www.portsmouth.gov.uk

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264



Introduction

Most historic buildings in the City are either Georgian or Victorian period, although a small number have even earlier origins. Window type and detail form one of the most important elements of historic buildings.

In recent years there has been a growing trend towards the replacement of original style windows in historic buildings with modern windows, of inappropriate materials and design. To preserve the character and appearance of historic buildings it is important to retain the original style and materials of windows.

This short leaflet outlines the legal position with respect to replacement windows in historic buildings and also gives advice on appropriate and inappropriate windows types.

Legal position

For listed buildings the situation is relatively straightforward. Any change to the design, style or materials of any window forming part of a listed building would normally require the prior grant of listed building consent, because such an alteration would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest. If work is carried out to a listed building without listed building consent then an offence has been committed and the offender may be liable to prosecution by the Local Planning Authority.

For non-listed buildings, including buildings situated within conservation areas, the position is more complicated. Planning permission would normally be required for replacement windows if:

- the method of opening was to be different (e.g. sliding to hinged to open outwards);
- the pattern of glazing bars differed;
- the size of the window opening was to be altered; or
- the profile and thickness of the frame was to be significantly different.

If the property is a single house (ie. not flats or commercial) planning permission is not normally required for replacement windows unless a special order has been placed on the property (called an Article 4(2) Direction).

To be sure of the legal position it is always advisable to check with the Planning Services before carrying out any works involving change to windows in historic buildings.

Appropriate materials & design

Most windows in historic buildings in Portsmouth are painted timber sliding sashes, normally recessed to form an external reveal, although there are examples of side hung timber casement windows, particularly for dormers. It is vitally important to retain the original style of windows and material type to preserve the essential character, appearance and integrity of historic buildings.

In many instances repairs can be carried out to existing original timber windows because the areas of decay are often limited to the cill, bottom rail or stile. Often the most cost effective method is to cut out the decayed area of timber and graft in new sections to extend the life of existing timber windows.

Where existing windows are ill-fitting and draughty it is often possible to refurbish the windows and install draught stripping. A number of firms specialise in this particular work. Original glass should, if possible, be retained and re-used. Crown and cylinder glass have a distinct character derived from imperfections found in old glass. Modern flat plate glass cannot achieve the same character. If double glazing is required to reduce heat loss then an appropriate secondary glazing system could be considered rather than the installation of double glazed units, however, some timber double glazed sash windows are now available which do reasonably replicate historic windows.

