



1. Aims of this guide

Berwick-upon-Tweed Civic Society is a Registered Charity, a key aim of which is protecting, restoring, and enhancing the listed buildings and Conservation Areas in Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal. An important part of this role is to comment on planning applications. Often applications to replace windows in listed buildings are refused. Replacing doors and windows in non-listed buildings in Berwick Conservation Area also requires planning approval and this is sometimes refused because the proposals do not respect the character of the building. This prompted us to write this guide, which is intended to lead property owners through the system, potentially saving them time and money. It aims to be a practical introduction to a surprisingly complicated subject.

We explain why it is important to conserve historic windows in listed buildings. We also give some guidance about maintenance, repair and energy saving. Applications to replace exterior doors crop up much less often but the same principles apply. There will be times when doors and windows are beyond repair and it is important to ensure that replacements harm to the character of the building and its setting. For clarity the guide deals with listed buildings and non-listed buildings separately. The resulting repetition of some paragraphs is intentional.

This is not intended to be a design guide. Historic England provides excellent advice about traditional windows and this is referenced at the beginning of the next section. There is also an excellent guide developed for use in the Berwick Conservation Area. It is available on the Northumberland County Council website.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/Conservation/DM-Doors-Windows-compressed.pdf>

As well as summarising the key issues for listed buildings and Conservation Areas, we also give details of some professionals and contractors who have experience in this type of work (the list is not exhaustive). Neither Berwick-upon-Tweed Civic Society nor its officers have any commercial relationship with the firms listed. For those who would like more detailed information about planning related matters, we have prepared another short guide about making a planning application and heritage protection in the planning system. The information is only provided for introductory guidance. You should always seek advice from a suitably qualified and experienced professional.

2. Why are traditional windows special and why are they at risk?

Historic England answers this question in *Traditional Windows: Their Care, Repair and Upgrading* (2014, revised 2017).

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/traditional-windows-care-repair-upgrading/heag039-traditional-windows-revfeb17/>

“The loss of traditional windows from our older buildings poses one of the major threats to our heritage. Traditional windows and their glazing make an important contribution to the significance of historic areas. They are an integral part of the design of older buildings and can be important artefacts



in their own right, often made with great skill and ingenuity with materials of a higher quality than are generally available today. The distinctive appearance of historic hand-made glass is not easily imitated in modern glazing.”

“Replacement plastic (PVC-u) windows pose one the greatest threats to the heritage value of historic areas...

... they are instantly recognisable because they cannot match the sections and proportions of historic joinery.”

These professional opinions matter because the local planning authority, Northumberland County Council, will normally be guided by Historic England on best practice in building conservation.

3. Repair or replacement?

The PVC-u replacement window industry has persuaded many building owners that old timber windows are rotten, draughty and beyond repair.



Figure 1 Sash window with decaying cill and bottom rail

Repair and retention of traditional windows

Historic England argues that with careful repair and the correct paint treatment, traditional windows can be repaired more cheaply than replacing them. Because of the high quality and durability of timber used in the past, many are already more than 300-years old. They have been successfully repaired many times during their long lives. Their energy efficiency can also be discreetly upgraded with draught stripping or certain designs of secondary double-glazing. Bath Preservation Trust worked with the Centre for Sustainable Energy to provide practical guidance on these and other issues.

https://www.cse.org.uk/downloads/reports-and-publications/energy-advice/insulation-and-heating/warmer_bath_june2011.pdf

Repaired historic windows with draught strips, coupled with the use of traditional internal shutters and heavy curtains, can produce heat savings similar to new double-glazed windows. Bear in mind too that windows typically account for only 10%-20% of the heat loss from a building. Many other issues need to be tackled.

Windows require regular maintenance to avoid more extensive repairs. After World War I, traditional linseed oil paints were steadily replaced by paints based on artificial resins or alkyds. These create non-porous films which split at construction joints, letting in and trapping rainwater and causing wet rot. See Figure 1. Repairs can be made by cutting back beyond the rotten wood and splicing in timber inserts. Historic England recommends the use of linseed oil paints which resist moisture and restore the oil content of the wood. It also acknowledges that 100% acrylic resin paints have produced some promising results.

Replacement doors and windows – listed buildings

Best practice conservation advice is that building owners should repair and retain historic joinery and glazing. However, replacing historic doors and windows in listed buildings will usually be considered in cases where repair is not reasonably practical. Replacement doors and windows should exactly match original joinery. They should be constructed from high quality seasoned timber or Accoya, a processed and hardened softwood, for which longer warranties tend to be available. Slimline double glazing may be permitted provided that it is in line with Historic England guidance.

Replacement doors and windows – Berwick Conservation Area



Figure 2 Red line boundary of Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area

The replacement of doors and windows and the installation of porches is permitted development in Spittal, Tweedmouth and outside the Berwick Conservation Area. No planning application is required for individual houses but it is required for apartments and for non-residential buildings. Applications



are required inside the Berwick Conservation Area, which includes the entire town centre and much of the periphery. See [Figure 2](#).

Bear in mind that Conservation Areas include buildings from different eras. The built heritage and design team at the planning authority will usually expect design proposals to respect the original materials and designs. For example, some buildings were designed to have steel or aluminium windows.

However, most windows in the Berwick Conservation Area are made from timber. Replacement doors and windows should match original joinery precisely. Expert joinery manufacturers can do this but many offer generic “period” windows that only approximate to original designs. These may well they should be constructed from high quality seasoned timber or Accoya, a processed and hardened softwood, for which longer warranties tend to be available. In unlisted buildings double glazing is usually acceptable provided that it is suitable for the character of the door or window. The guidance in the 2017 Historic England guide referred to at the beginning of Section 2 of this guide should enable you and your advisers to arrive at proposals that have the best chance of achieving planning approval.

4. Summary of the key issues – listed buildings and Conservation Areas

The following is a summary of our view of the main “rules” and the key issues relating to doors and windows in listed buildings and in Conservation Areas.

Listed buildings

- You must obtain planning approval in advance to carry out material alterations to listed buildings, including altering or replacing doors and windows.
- Not obtaining approval is against the law and can result in prosecution. Penalties may include a requirement to remove the unauthorised alteration.
- For the best chance of good advice and a successful outcome, always use a professionally qualified architect or surveyor who can show strong experience in building conservation.
- Where practicable, the local planning authority normally requires that historic windows and doors in listed buildings should be repaired, not replaced.
- A skilled joiner can repair and prevent draughts in badly damaged doors and windows.
- Installing double-glazed panels in historic windows is not usually practicable.
- Secondary glazing is preferred. If it is easily removed without damaging the historic fabric, it may not require planning consent.
- When it is not reasonably practical to repair doors and windows, replacement may be permitted but any application should be supported by a formal report from a heritage professional or expert joiner.
- Replacement windows must be an exact match for the originals.
- Double glazing will usually be considered in replacement windows but it will require careful design in line with Historic England’s advice.

Conservation Areas

Owners of unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas usually need planning approval in advance for any alterations to the exterior of buildings.

There are some exceptions in the Tweedmouth and Spittal Conservation Areas:



- Altering, improving or replacing doors and windows and installing porches in houses is permitted development and planning permission is not required.
- However, planning permission is required for flats and non-residential buildings.

The requirements are stricter in Berwick Conservation Area:

- Planning approval must be obtained for altering, improving or replacing doors and windows and installing porches.
- The local planning authority normally insists that replacement windows and doors should be constructed to match the original designs as closely as possible: “like-for-like”.
- Most doors and windows are wooden but some more modern buildings may have steel or aluminium doors and windows; their designs should usually be replicated.
- Replacement windows in unlisted buildings can usually incorporate double-glazing of an appropriate thickness if the design otherwise retains the character of the original windows. As in listed buildings, it would be prudent to be guided by Historic England’s advice.

5. Applying for planning approval and getting building work done

It might be assumed that replacing a door or window with something new and energy-efficient would be straightforward. In reality this is very much more difficult in listed buildings which impose additional responsibilities on their owners. There are also restrictions within the Berwick Conservation Area. Owners have a duty to preserve historic character for the benefit of future generations.

The Civic Society strongly recommends taking advice from an architect or surveyor with heritage experience. As with any professional advice, the building owner might wonder if the additional cost is justified but we have seen many cases in which taking no advice or consulting inexpert advisers has led to a planning refusal. It can be difficult to find professionals with the right specialist experience. See Appendix A. Similarly, many window replacement contractors only supply PVC-u windows. As explained in Sections 2 and 3, these are unsuitable for heritage buildings. But there are good quality joinery firms in Berwick and the wider area who will repair existing windows and make new ones. See Appendix B.

The firms listed in the appendices to this guide have been involved in well-reasoned and often successful planning applications over the past few years or are understood to specialise in this type of work. The list is not a “recommendation” but may assist building owners who are having difficulty finding help with their projects. We repeat, neither Berwick-upon-Tweed Civic Society nor its officers have any commercial relationships with the firms listed.



Pre-application advice

It may be prudent to discuss your ideas with the local planning authority before submitting a formal application. This is best dealt with by taking pre-application advice through the planning team. This is a formal process but it is usually cheaper and quicker than making a full application. See the link below:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Pre-application-enquiry.aspx>

Berwick-upon-Tweed Civic Society

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Appendix A – Local professionals with heritage experience

Heritage consulting is a specialist activity and only some practices have significant experience of building conservation and the relevant aspects of the planning system. Based on their professional profiles, the following firms may be able to provide advice on proposed alterations to listed buildings and in Conservation Areas. Some practices may not be able to take on very small projects because of workload or because their overheads make smaller projects uneconomic.

Smith & Garratt

The Guildhall, Ladykirk, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 1XL

INFO@SMITHANDGARRATT.COM

Telephone: 01289 382209 or 07702 091626 (Hugh Garratt LL.B FRICS, Senior Surveyor)

<https://www.smithandgarratt.com/>

Thomas Stewart Architect

28 West End Road, Tweedmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2HL

Telephone: 07968 720217

[Also possibly:

Edwin Thompson

44-48 Hide Hill, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 1AB

Telephone: 01289 304432

f.wathen@edwin-thompson.co.uk

Simpson & Brown Architects

The Old Printworks, 77a Brunswick Street Edinburgh EH7 5HS

Telephone: 0131 555 4678

admin@simpsonandbrown.co.uk]



Appendix B – Joinery manufacturer and repair

Based on their websites and local awareness of the type of work undertaken, the following list includes manufacturing joiners who have made doors and windows that replicate original designs for installation in listed buildings and in Conservation Areas. We have noted which firms will remove and replace existing windows and which will expect you to have your own site joiner for this work. We have stated which firms carry out repairs to existing heritage windows. At the time of writing, none of these are in Berwick, although we would like to include some.

MANUFACTURERS

Allan Brothers

Allan House, Ord Road, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 2XU

enquiries@allanbrothers.co.uk

Telephone: 01289 334600

<https://www.allanbrothers.co.uk/>

Major joinery manufacturer long-established in Berwick, now part of a large European group. Specialises in modern high-performance windows but will also fabricate replacement heritage windows. Manufacture only. Allan Brothers have a reputation for quality and longevity and can be expected to be at the more expensive end of price scales.

Crawfords Joinery

3A Brewery Bank, Tweedmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2AQ

Telephone: 01289 306110

<https://crawfordsjoinery.co.uk/>

Small/medium-sized joinery manufacturer specialising in doors and windows. Manufacture only but may suggest local site joiners for installation.

WRM Joinery

William Matthews Joinery, 31 Northumberland Road, Tweedmouth TD15 2AS

Telephone: 01289 304014

<http://wrmjoinery.co.uk/>

Smaller sized joinery manufacturer. Manufacture only.

Blackthorn Timber Windows

The head office is at Great Whittington, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Contact is through the website or on the landline below for the Northumberland area.

Telephone: 01434 672757

<https://blackthorntimber.com/contact/>

Larger firm specialising in manufacturing and installing timber windows, doors and conservatories. The sash window range includes a wide variety of styles and detailing.

REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT



Edinburgh Sash and Case

50a Sighthill Crescent, Edinburgh EH11 4QD

ejmanufacture@gmail.com

Telephone: 0131 453 5900

<https://www.edinburghsashandcase.co.uk/>

Medium sized firm specialising in sash and case windows, including manufacture, installation refurbishment and double-glazing upgrades.

Wm. Mallen Joinery

Joiners Workshop, Back Lane, Yetholm TD5 8RW

Telephone: 01573 420452 or 07977 891048

<https://wmallenjoinery.co.uk/>

Small joinery firm specialising in sash and case windows, including making and installing bespoke designs to match existing windows. They will also repair and restore existing windows.

Matthew Lee Joinery Ltd

The Workshop, West Moneylaws, Cornhill-on-Tweed, Northumberland, TD12 4QD

Telephone: 01890 850677

Email: office@matthewleejoinery.co.uk

<http://www.matthewleejoinery.co.uk/>

Medium-sized joinery firm and general contractor. Will undertake repair and replacement work and produce condition reports.

V.M. Dundas Joiner and Carpenter

Little Mill, Near Alnwick Northumberland NE66 3LL

Telephone: 01665 577647

<http://vmdundas.co.uk/joinery-carpentry-services.htm>

Small joinery firm specialising in conservation repair work. They also make and install replacement windows including sash windows.