

South Tyneside Planning Group

Shaping Our Future

Repair and Maintenance of Traditional Buildings

January 2013



South Tyneside Council

'Informed conservation' means understanding the historical development, and significance, of your building or area and identifying the most appropriate approach to its management.

Introduction

This is a guide for the owners of historic buildings on how best to maintain and, where necessary, repair your property. As there are a wide range of historic buildings in South Tyneside, the guidance remains broad; you can obtain more detailed advice from one of the following websites:

www.spab.org.uk/homeowners/

or

www.ihbc.org.uk/publications/stitch/stitch.html

The most important element of caring for historic buildings is maintenance. Regular maintenance can avoid the need for repair or restoration work altogether. In the long run this is likely to save you money and time and will help to sustain the building into the future.

Right: Failing to undertake regular maintenance can have a seriously detrimental effect on your building. No specialist skills are needed to remove the vegetation and allow rainwater to flow freely into the rainwater goods. Joinery that is exposed to the elements needs to be repainted every 5 to 7 years.



Listed Buildings

It is a criminal offence to carry out work to a listed building, other than minor like-for-like repairs, so if you are planning significant repairs or alterations then you must obtain Listed Building Consent from the council. This protection applies equally to the inside and outside of the building, and also to most structures within its grounds.



Above: the Grade II Listed Souter Lighthouse

Conservation Areas

The council has a duty to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the special character and appearance of conservation areas. If your property is in a conservation area then it may also be covered by an Article 4 Direction which introduces additional protection and means that you will need planning permission to carry out certain works.



Contrasting characters – above: Westoe Conservation Area, and below: East Boldon Conservation Area



South Tyneside benefits from a complete set of Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans for all 11 of its conservation areas. These can be viewed at: www.southtyneside.info/conservation

Scheduled Monuments

Scheduled monuments are legally protected archaeological sites, which can include buildings. As with Listed Buildings, it is an offence to undertake works to a scheduled monument without Scheduled Monument Consent.

Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) applications are administered, processed and determined by English Heritage, not the council. Application forms can be downloaded from their website www.english-heritage.org.uk and should be sent to the English Heritage North East regional office.



Above: Marsden Lime Kilns is recognised as an important part of Britain's industrial heritage.

Locally Significant Heritage Assets (the Local List)

Buildings on the local list are considered by the public and the council as having special local architectural or historic interest. Whilst inclusion on the local list does not impart any additional planning controls, it does enable these assets to be properly considered against development proposals submitted to the council.



Above: the former Magistrates Court in Jarrow.

Supplementary Planning Document 21: Locally Significant Heritage Assets (SPD 21) provides planning guidance for those sites and properties on the list, encouraging the retention and conservation of South Tyneside's local heritage assets. This can be viewed at:

www.southtyneside.info/conservation

Other Historic Buildings

It may be that your historic building has no statutory protection at all; this does not mean that it is not of interest or is unworthy of appropriate care, and the following advice will still be of use.



Above: this building is not locally listed or located in a Conservation Area, yet it is being cared for in a sympathetic manner by its owners, who clearly take very good care of it.

Maintenance

Guidelines for the inspection and essential maintenance of historic buildings are set out below. They are intended to help you to carry out an initial inspection; further advice is available from the council's Historic Environment Officer. The council is not in a position to undertake surveys on behalf of owners but is able to offer advice on suitable specifications for repairs and whether it is necessary to obtain consent for works.

The aim of this guidance is to provide owners of all historic buildings with a guide to their inspection and repair. By carrying out regular inspections it is possible to establish the nature, extent and cause of any problems at an early stage. This gives you the opportunity to remedy defects promptly and economically. Damp problems, in particular, can often be remedied quickly and without recourse to expensive and invasive damp proofing methods. Damp is often the result of water getting into a building, for example through a leaking or blocked gutter. If the water source is removed and the building left to dry out naturally, the problem will normally be resolved.

The inspection of a large historic building is well within the capability of the average property owner. It is generally wise to then consult a professional as to the most efficient and appropriate method of repair.

Maintenance year planner

Immediately

- **Attend to** overflowing cold water cisterns



In rainy periods

- **Inspect** gutters, hoppers, downpipes and gullies for leaks and blockages

Frequently

- **Test** smoke alarms

Every spring

- **Inspect roofs for:** broken and displaced slates or tiles; ridge and verge slates and tiles that need re-bedding and/or re-pointing; perforated lead flashings and gutter linings; perished felt underlay
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- **Check for:** deterioration of render finishes, brick and stone faces; unsound pointing to walls, parapets and chimneys. At the same time check that air brick vents are unobstructed and that everywhere around the base of the building, ground levels are not less than 150mm below the damp proof course (if there is one)
- **Trim back** ivy around openings and at eaves. Where it is necessary to remove large areas of ivy its main stems should be cut at low level and the ivy left to die back in-situ before gently removing it at a later date. This will minimise damage to mortar in joints
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- **Arrange for** any external painting as required. Check condition of glazing and putty and operation of doors, casements and sashes



- **Remove** old nests from unused chimneys and install wire mesh grilles to prevent further nesting. Sweep chimneys that are in use
- **Arrange for** routine servicing of boilers and inspection of gas appliances and flues

Every late spring/summer

- **Check** all timber floors for excessive deflection
- Take any opportunity to **examine** underfloor voids for dampness, rot and the adequacy of ventilation
- **Check** condition of staircases and balconies and whether they meet current safety regulations, particularly in respect of height of balustrades in buildings used by the public
- **Examine** internal screens, panelling, partitions, doors, frames and ironmongery
- **Examine** wall and ceiling finishes
- **Check** washers to ballcock valves and taps in cold and hot water and heating systems

Every autumn

- **Clean** out gutters, hoppers, downpipes and gullies as often as necessary during and after leaf fall
- **Clean** out manholes and rod drains. Inspect for broken manhole covers and gulley grates



Every winter

- **Determine** which trees and shrubs constitute a potential problem in respect of roof invasion, collapse onto building, etc.
- **Clear** snow regularly from vulnerable areas
- **Inspect** roof spaces for water and vermin penetration, adequacy of ventilation and condition of entire roof structure including that of any insulation in voids
- **Check** water-based heating systems and bleed radiators. Check for even heat distribution throughout building

Annually

- **Arrange** servicing of fire extinguishers
- **Check** boundary walls, fences and gates



- **Check** paved areas, paths and steps
- **Check** operation of panic bolts/latches to emergency exit doors

Every 5 years

- **Arrange** for testing of electrical systems

The following page illustrates a typical traditional terraced building.

While this building may not look exactly like your own, it provides a useful guide to some of the features that are typical to historic buildings and that are referred to in the text on these pages.

A typical traditional terraced house



- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Roofs | 11. Rainwater pipe |
| 2. Ridge | 12. Window cill |
| 3. Gutters | 13. Stone dressings |
| 4. Eaves | 14. Masonry, brickwork and pointing |
| 5. Bay | 15. Sash window |
| 6. Fascia | 16. Door |
| 7. External joinery | 17. Garden, grounds and trees |
| 8. Chimney stacks and pots | 18. Gate |
| 9. Lead flashing | 19. Railings |
| 10. Hopper head | 20. Boundary wall |

Repair

The main purpose of repair is to slow down the inevitable process of decay without damaging the character of your building, altering any of the features which endow it with historic or architectural importance, or unnecessarily destroying historic fabric. The extent of any repair should only be that required to ensure the long term survival of a building or its features: wholesale replacement is rarely necessary.

If the repair of historic buildings is not sensitively undertaken then those qualities which make them attractive and significant will be lost. As a general rule, you are most likely to be successful in preserving the character of a building if you ensure that repairs are carried out in the same manner and with similar materials to those used in the original construction. It should also be remembered that it is not just the front elevation of a historic building which is important. The same care and attention should be exercised when repairing or replacing elements of the less visible elevations and the interior.

You are encouraged to record that element of the building you are making alterations to before work is carried out. This may be by means of photographs and measured drawing of the relevant parts of the building. The information may help inform how you carry out your alterations and will also provide a knowledge base for future owners of the building.

Where historic buildings are of particular importance or complexity, it may be necessary to employ experts from different specialisms to design appropriate repairs. This may include specialist conservation practitioner.

Windows are a common cause for concern in historic buildings, and it is frequently the case that a window which appears, at first glance, to be rotten is in fact only in poor condition in localised areas. Relatively small-scale, in situ

repairs can often save a historic window and sustain it long into the future. The following page illustrates a section through a typical timber sliding sash window, identifying parts and explaining some terms.

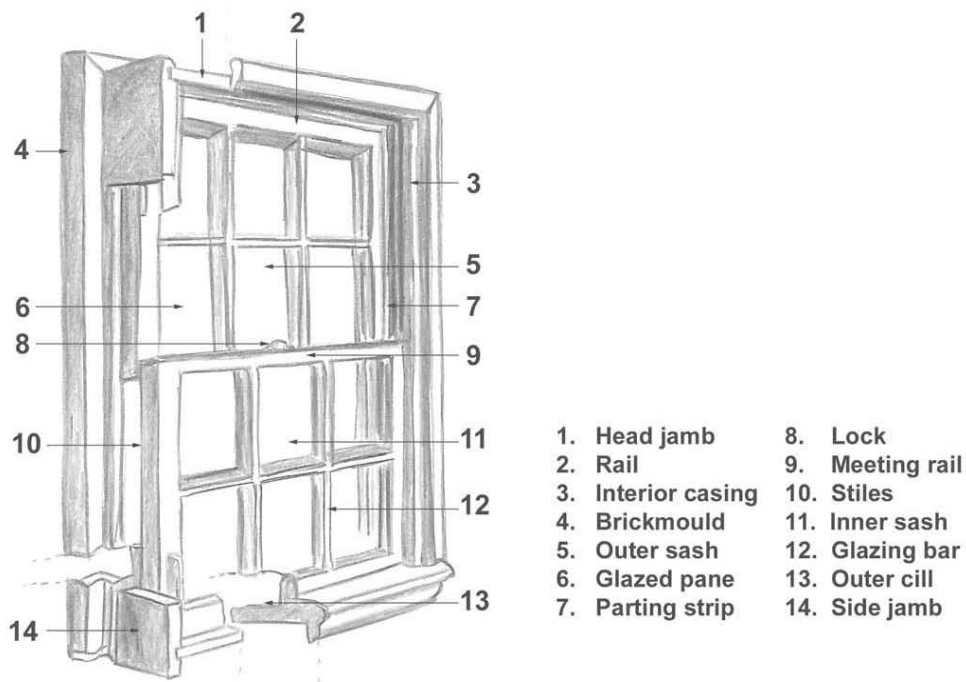
Before:



After:



A Section through a Typical Sash Window



Glazing bars

Glazing bars are delicate timber bars that separate individual glass panes in a window. The panes fit into the bars and are secured with putty. Glazing bars often feature attractive profiles that cannot be replicated in any material other than timber.

Vertical emphasis

Traditional buildings usually feature windows with a 'vertical emphasis'. This means that they are taller than they are wide. Changing the proportions of a historic window opening can radically alter the overall appearance of a building, and should therefore be avoided.

Sash cords, weights and box housing

Sash windows slide up and down, controlled by the sash cord, which is attached to the side of the frame at one end and to a heavy weight (traditionally lead) at the other end. The weight is hidden from view in the box housing, to either side of the window frame. Friction and gravity thus control the movement of the window.

Painting

Windows from the 1700s onwards are usually softwood, and require regular redecoration in order to protect them from the elements. When repainting, old paint should be carefully removed as this will provide an opportunity to inspect the condition of the wood. Care should be taken not to paint over the putty that holds the glazing in place as this is likely to reduce natural movement and risk cracking. Likewise painting over moving parts, such as sash cords, will impede the smooth operation of the window and could result in it becoming stuck.

General repair principles

- **Avoid unnecessary replacement of historic fabric.** This will have a negative effect on a building's appearance and historic interest. For example, window frames and sashes are often replaced at considerable expense when they could be more appropriately and cheaply repaired and upgraded for thermal efficiency.
- When designing repairs, the prime consideration should be the **preservation of the appearance and historic integrity** of a building by matching the existing materials and methods of construction. Any combination of new and old materials should be honestly shown and no attempt should be made to artificially age materials.
- As a general rule, **only well tried and tested materials and methods of repair should be used on old buildings.** For example, the inappropriate repointing of brick and stonework with cement can be extremely damaging – in most cases the use of a lime mortar will be required.
- In any comprehensive repair scheme involving, for example, a street of houses, additions through age should not be removed in the pursuit of a fake perfection or completeness of style. Much of course depends on the quality and contribution of the later alterations and no hard and fast rules can be applied. You should always seek advice from specialists and the council.
- The **restoration of missing features** should only be undertaken where their presence is crucial to the appreciation of the original design and where sufficient evidence exists for accurate replacement.
- Where funds are limited, carry out a **phased programme of repairs** in a logical sequence starting with roofs and rainwater goods to ensure the building is wind and water tight before proceeding to walls, windows and so on.
- Although not strictly a repair, the **cleaning of facades** often accompanies repair and restoration work. Inappropriate methods can have a devastating effect on a building's appearance and can seriously damage the condition and performance of brick and stone walls. Cleaning should not be undertaken without a full appreciation of the consequences and without drawing up a very precise specification for its implementation. If your building is listed then you must obtain Listed Building Consent for any cleaning works.

Contacts for further information

You may also be interested in the other guides in this series:

- Living in a conservation area: a guide for residents
- Listed Buildings: a guide for owners and occupiers

These are available from the council's planning team and the council website www.southtyneside.info/conservation

Other organisations

Tyne and Wear Historic Environment Record
www.twsitelines.info

Heritage Gateway
www.heritagegateway.org.uk

Newcastle Heritage Partnership
www.heritagepartnership.org.uk

English Heritage
www.english-heritage.org.uk and
www.helm.org.uk

Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings
www.spab.org.uk
Institute for Historic Building Conservation
www.ihbc.org.uk

English Historic Towns Forum
www.historictownsforum.org

Historic Scotland
www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors (RICS)
www.rics.org

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)
www.architecture.com

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