

# property

*Expert advice from the property professionals by  
Richard Hardie, director, Livingroom Estate Agents*

## Conservation meets contemporary

It often feels as if conservationists and modernists are polar opposites on the issue of land and property development. The view is that conservationists are looking to preserve heritage and land at any cost while modernists want to tear down everything old in favour of the new.

In 2012, there is a middle ground with some extraordinary architects, property developers and home owners finding new and interesting ways to introduce contemporary design, latest technologies, environmentally-friendly features and modern structures but doing so with sympathy to the history of the building (and area) and a desire to retain the old.

One of the organisations that work tirelessly to protect Guernsey's historic houses and buildings, gardens, water mills, coastline, forests, farmland and island fortifications is the National Trust (link to [www.nationaltrust-gsy.org.gg](http://www.nationaltrust-gsy.org.gg)).

Where, in days gone by, the National Trust was perceived as a small group of Barbour-wearing, Wellington-booted fuddy duddies most people now appreciate that, in Guernsey at least, the trust is steered by a group of motivated individuals who live in the real world. Of course the trust council is there to preserve and enhance the island's natural beauty, its historic buildings and its heritage but the council's 15 members (including me) have a realistic view of life and understand the desires of individuals to live in the modern world.

The council is often asked to comment on current planning applications where heritage is a factor and it does so with a sympathetic eye welcoming sensible contemporary design that preserves what needs to be preserved.

Andrew Dyke, buildings advisor to the trust and leading architect with Cresswell, Cuttle and Dyke ([www.ccd-architects.com](http://www.ccd-architects.com)), gave a recent presentation to trust members de-mystifying some of the unique and complex challenges faced by Guernsey architects, their clients and the Environment Department. Andrew's practice has developed a reputation for exciting and innovative modern housing design and CCD has been involved in a number of sympathetic repairs and adaptations of old buildings, including major historic sites such as Castle Cornet, Town Church and Victor Hugo's Hauteville House.

CCD has been involved in several sympathetic historic upgrades including the award-winning Les Prevosts Farm (where an oak, glass structure created the light needed without compromising the original windows) and the marrying of the historic, listed Holy Trinity Church with a new, purpose-built, modern, three story annex.

Andrew's interesting, humorous and insightful talk tackled the big challenges faced when considering development: conservation meets contemporary, innovation meets regulation, planning meets practicality.

Andrew said: "Developing historic buildings need not be a collision of old and new but it does need to be a compromise.



TOP: Award-winning Les Prevosts Farm where an oak and glass structure creates the light needed without compromising the original windows

ABOVE: Listed Holy Trinity Church which marries the historic church with a new, purpose-built, modern, three story annex

"People considering developing historic properties need to be very sure of what they can achieve before embarking on the project – talk to the experts, be aware of the sensitivities and assess whether they can do what they want to do and, if not, they need to consider whether an historic building is the best for them."

Andrew said that, whereas the modern trend is for open plan with lots of light, historic buildings tend to be quite cellular and dark. He said removing internal walls, widening window openings (or considering dreaded PVC windows) are areas where planners and conservationists will be less than inclined to give ground.

In the estate agency sector, it is becoming more and more important that we, as agents, also understand the potential in properties for modernising while keeping one eye on what we know will be acceptable to planners and what can be practically achieved for our clients.

It is important that we advise our clients appropriately and manage expectations when there is an appetite for development. Many in Livingroom's own team have developed properties in Guernsey and can provide expert opinion and advice on how best our clients' can achieve their desires for their new homes. ■



**Contact: Richard Hardie or Simon Torode  
at Livingroom on 01481 233008 or visit  
[www.livingroom.gg](http://www.livingroom.gg)**



Andrew Dyke at CCD can be contacted on 01481 726461 or visit [www.ccd-architects.com](http://www.ccd-architects.com)