



# LIVING WITH A LISTED BUILDING... *(and learning to love it!)*

For a couple of years there has been a perception that altering or extending a listed property has become more difficult; and further anxiety has been caused by the news that the Register of Listed (Protected) Buildings is to be reviewed by the Environment Department. If you are the owner or the potential purchaser of an historic dwelling, what is this likely to mean to you, and how could it affect the use of your house and any changes you might wish to make?

The good news is that the Review is likely to be an improvement of the current situation. At present, it is recognised that there are a significant number of dwellings that are on the Register that should not really be listed at all; the Environment Department's priority will be to de-register those as soon as possible (although this is, in reality, going to take a few years). Those of us who are interested in historic

buildings will also be aware that there are some important ones that slipped through the original assessment in the 1980s/1990s, and are not listed at all. As an island that is proud of its exceptional heritage and culture, we should wish that the structures which are of particular merit or importance should be protected for our descendants to also enjoy in the future. The history of our island reminds us who we are and why Guernsey has a unique place in the world.

The reasons for listing a property are currently being reviewed by the Environment Department, and a public consultation is about to take place. The criteria for placing a building on the Register obviously include the age of the structure; the older it is, the more likely to be listed. Similarly, if the building has significant architectural merit it is probable that it will be on the Register. But the criteria can include less obvious facts; such as special technical innovations or associations with important historical figures or events.



If your own house is listed, this does not imply that you cannot do work to it, or alter or extend it. It does however mean that those elements of the building which are of special importance, such as an historic fireplace, a tourelle or original doors and windows for instance, will need to be identified and protected. It is unlikely that you would be able to replace 200 year old sash windows with modern pvc look-alikes; rather you would be encouraged to repair and retain them, perhaps at the same time improving draught-stripping to reduce heat loss.

Unless you are an expert yourself it is essential to obtain the advice of a suitably qualified and experienced professional at an early stage. A Chartered Architect or Chartered Surveyor with specialist conservation experience will be able to guide you through the stages that are necessary, and give you realistic advice regarding your aspirations for the building. Often the first stage will be surveying and researching the building in order to establish just what is important and sensitive, and what other parts may not be so important. Certain types of repair may be able to commence without formal approvals; other more extensive projects could require a 'Statement of

Significance' and a method statement to explain how repairs and alterations are to be undertaken. Your Architect would also be able to discuss and negotiate with the planners to achieve what you plan to undertake. Often, when an approval is granted for the works, conditions are imposed on how certain elements are undertaken, so that the Department can be sure that the work is carried out correctly. Again, your Architect or Surveyor can smooth this process, and ensure that the whole operation can be carried out in the most appropriate way to everyone's satisfaction.

So, what are the advantages of owning a listed building? Apart from the obvious beauty and interest that many such buildings hold, they can have an enhanced value due to their rarity and special qualities, which many discerning people appreciate. A carefully and sensitively restored property, incorporating all the modern conveniences one could expect, will command a significant premium in the market. However, perhaps the most important aspect is that you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are a custodian of a part of Guernsey's rich history, and that you are putting your own stamp on something which will last for many centuries to come, and be valued and enjoyed by future generations.

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