

Helping you care for our built heritage

RIBA Conservation Register –
Guidance for private homeowners





Introduction to our built heritage

Our built heritage includes important historic buildings, ancient monuments and listed buildings as well as buildings in conservation areas, older buildings of traditional construction and any other built asset of note.

You may live in one of the six million homes of traditional construction, maybe a Georgian, Victorian or Edwardian terraced house. Or you may live in a conservation area or in a listed building. All these form part of our built heritage and are worthy of being cared for in the most appropriate way.

Why this is important to you

1. Understanding your responsibilities is an important first step.
2. It is also important to understand that investing in appropriate building works adds value to your home, whether you are considering repair, maintenance or development including extensions and remodelling.
3. There is a great deal of help and assistance available to you to ensure you care for your home in the best way possible.

By taking advantage of the help that is available you will be able to hand on your property to the next generation knowing that your stewardship has been appropriate and has added value. You are much more likely to do the property justice and much less likely to come up against difficulties.

Understanding the terminology used is also useful. That is why we have included a Frequently Asked Questions section below.

This guidance is appropriate for those living in one of the six million homes of traditional construction in the UK, like a Georgian, Victorian or Edwardian house. If you live in a conservation area or in a listed building you have additional statutory responsibilities that are outlined below.

Your responsibilities if you live in a conservation area

The term conservation area generally applies to an urban area, or the core of a village, that is 'desirable to preserve or enhance' because of its architectural or historic interest. It is the protection of the neighbourhood or area as a whole that is intended, rather than specific buildings.

However, each building within a conservation area adds to, or detracts from, its special character, which is why building works may need special consent. For example, if you wish to demolish a building with a volume of greater than 15 cubic metres or demolish certain walls, fences, gates or railings, you may need to obtain Conservation Area Consent. Trees are often protected in conservation areas even when they are on private property. The exterior finish and colour, especially when fronting a road, need careful consideration, and controls may also cover the addition of cladding, dormer windows and satellite dishes.

You can find out if your home is in a conservation area by contacting your local authority.



Your responsibilities if you own or live in a listed building

There are around half a million listed buildings in the UK, many of which are private homes. Owning a listed building is a fantastic experience but it can also be a challenge. Listed buildings are often full of history and character and they are protected because of their age, their rarity, aesthetics or special interest.

If your home is a listed building it is important that you take care of it in the most appropriate way in terms of maintenance and improvement and especially if you want to extend, remodel or refurbish your property. The law is very clear – you must obtain consent for any demolition, partial demolition or alterations that affect its character as a listed building. It is a criminal offence not to do so and can result in prosecution and a substantial fine. Listed building enforcement notices can be issued if unauthorised work takes place and you could be forced to restore the building to its former state. You or your architect should consult the relevant statutory body to determine whether any proposed alterations require consent.

Examples of alterations that would normally require listed building consent are:

- an extension to a building
- removal and replacement of doors and windows
- alterations to the interior fabric

To find out if your home is listed please see the final FAQ on page 4.

How the RIBA can help

At the RIBA we believe it is vital to ensure that you are aware not only of your responsibilities, but also the help that is available to you. You can visit the RIBA

website, and others listed on page 6, for more help and information.

You could also consult a fully accredited member of the RIBA Conservation Register at Specialist Conservation Architect (SCA) or Conservation Architect (CA) level. They are a fantastic source of professional help and a major step towards ensuring buildings works are carried out correctly and appropriately. They can add value using their depth and breadth of training, rigorous and analytical approach and their technical expertise.

What is the RIBA Conservation Register?

The RIBA Conservation Register is an accreditation scheme providing building owners with an online source of architects who are qualified and experienced to work on all aspects of the development, repair and maintenance and conservation of our built heritage.

By using the Register you can ensure that the architect you choose has the necessary up-to-date specialist skills, training and expertise to assist in the proper maintenance and development of your built heritage asset.

What to do next

You may be considering carrying out building works on your home. Whether your home is truly historic, listed or in a conservation area, or if it is simply an older building of traditional construction, we strongly recommend you use the Register to find an appropriately accredited architect in your area to assist you. That way you can get the right advice, avoiding unnecessary expense, mitigate risk and assure quality.



General FAQs

1. Am I a 'steward' of an important building?

Being a steward, or stewardship, are the best terms to describe what we believe are your responsibilities as the owner of a built heritage asset to enable the safe transition of our built heritage to the next generation.

2. What do you mean by our 'built heritage'?

Our built heritage includes ancient monuments and important buildings such as historic buildings, listed buildings, buildings in conservation areas, older buildings of traditional construction and any other built asset of note.

3. Isn't this just about listed buildings?

No. There are around half a million listed buildings in the UK, but there are over 6 million traditionally built buildings that will benefit from specialist care when you consider development, repair and maintenance as well as conservation.

4. I live in a conservation area. Does this mean I need special consent to extend my house?

You may need special consent. Either contact an accredited architect in your area for help, using the RIBA Conservation Register, or contact your local council.

5. Where do I go to find professional advice?

You should visit the RIBA website at www.architecture.com, go to Find an Architect, then Conservation Register where you will find a list of accredited architects and then search by name. Alternatively you can call the RIBA on 020 7307 5375 and ask for the RIBA Conservation Register team.

FAQs about Listed Buildings

1. What is a listed building?

A listed building is considered to be of special architectural or historic interest. Lists are compiled on behalf of Government in the different regions of the UK.

2. Are there different types of listed building?

Yes. There are three levels of listed building status in England and Wales. Grade II is the most common. Grade II listed buildings are considered of special interest and therefore all steps should be taken to preserve them. Grade II* listed properties are considered to be particularly important examples of special interest buildings. Grade I listed buildings are regarded as being of exceptional interest and carry the most conditions for owners. In Scotland and Northern Ireland listed buildings are graded A and B.

3. Is it illegal to alter a listed building without permission?

Yes, it is a criminal offence if its character as a listed building is affected.

4. How do I know if my property is listed?

If you think your property may be listed, perhaps because of its age, location or other knowledge you have, you should check its listed status before considering carrying out any work. You can search The National Heritage List for England on the English Heritage website. For other parts of the UK please see the Cadw, Historic Scotland and Northern Ireland Environment Agency websites. Links to these organisations are listed on Page 6. Alternatively you can contact the planning department at your local council.



About the RIBA

The Royal Institute of British Architects champions better buildings, communities and the environment through architecture and our members. We provide the standards, training, support and recognition that put our members – in the UK and overseas – at the peak of their profession.

With government, we work to improve the design quality of public buildings, new homes and new communities.

We also hold one of the largest and most important collections of architectural drawings, photographs and archives in the world, and stage talks, exhibitions, events and awards (including the prestigious RIBA Stirling Prize) that help people see their surroundings in a completely new way.

Helping you care for our built heritage

RIBA Conservation Register – Guidance for private homeowners



Further reading and resources

Further information can be found on the websites for:

- English Heritage
- Cadw
- Historic Scotland
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- Listed Property Owners Club
- Planning Portal

For further information on the RIBA Conservation Register please go to:
architecture.com/ConservationRegister

Contact us

Conservation Registrar

66 Portland Place

London

W1B 1AD

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7307 5375

info@riba.org

www.architecture.com