

## Doors in historic and listed buildings

A general introduction for homeowners

2.10

### External:

The focus of the main façade of most buildings is the front door and surround. These will vary from the simple boarded ledged and braced doors set in plain architraves as found in many cottages to framed and panelled doors of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries set in more elaborate door cases.

The type of door can be either a clue to the original age of a property or will assist in dating phases of alterations. Whatever the form, it is important that historic doors, architraves, door cases, door furniture, fanlights, associated canopies and porches are retained wherever possible. Evidence of alteration or adaptation adds to the interest of a historic door.

Doors are often replaced needlessly and inappropriately resulting in a loss of the character of the building as the result of common problems of decay which could be resolved with the use of appropriate methods of repair to historic doors.

The most common cause of deterioration in external doors is the effect of damp to the lower edge; this may also affect the bottom edge of door cases and to some degree timber thresholds. These problems can be readily solved by the replacement of damp, decayed timber, using traditional carpentry techniques such as scarfing new timber to old, by an experienced joiner.

In the case of painted doors, it is important that the door is carefully repainted before re-hanging to enable all surfaces, including the top and bottom edges, to be fully coated in paint. The latter reduces the chance of moisture absorption to both protect against the recurrence of the original fault, but also the swelling of the door which can cause it to stick in the frame.

Home owners often complain about drafts seeping around old doors. This may be the effect of seasonal movements, as wood expands and contracts, or the gradual distortion of frames due to gentle movement of the frame or surrounding structure over time. It will always be worth seeking assistance from an experienced joiner to adjust frames and doors as necessary, to re-hang doors and review how hinges are working. The application of draft sealant products may be appropriate together with the use of a heavy curtain over the door in winter.

Householders often seek the replacement of external doors due to concerns about security, whether this relates to the quality of the door or locking mechanisms. The first response should always be to seek a means of retaining the historic door even if this might entail strengthening in it in some way. Similarly, original locks and hinges should not be replaced, but augmented if required.



## New external door openings

Inserting new doorways needs to be justified in the context of the design of the building and having regard to the significance of any historic fabric that would need to be removed. The design of any new door and associated joinery should complement and be sympathetic to the existing structure.

## French doors/glazed external doors

There is often an understandable desire to insert predominantly glazed doors to rear elevations to allow access to rear gardens and to let more light into historic properties. These types of alteration must be very carefully considered in the context of the significance of any part of the original structure that would need to be removed to allow a large (or extended opening) and the impact of such an alteration on the character and appearance of the existing historic building. Doors of this type are less likely to be appropriate for a timber framed building in terms of design and potential loss of historic fabric, but might be more easily incorporated in to the design of an 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century building.

Care also needs to be taken where it is proposed to enlarge an existing window opening to form a doorway. Consideration needs to be given to the significance of any window to be replaced and whether removal will result in the loss of important historic fabric or affect the appearance or understanding of the of the development or history of the building.

The replacement of a historic door or an alteration to the design and form of a door will require Listed Building Consent. (Application requirements are detailed at the end of this leaflet). Evidence of historic alterations to doors add to their interest; the fact that these may result in a less pleasing aesthetic appearance is not a reason for replacement.

Where a historic door has already been replaced then the provision of a like for like replacement will not normally require Listed Building Consent. However the need to replace a modern door may provide an opportunity to improve or enhance the listed building by altering the design of the door so it is always advisable to [consult the Historic Buildings Officer](#).

## Internal doors

The design and appearance of internal doors is an integral part of the historic development of a building in a similar manner to external doors. Retention of original internal doors tends to be much more variable than external doors due to the misconception that listed building protection does not extend to the interiors of buildings, (but it does), so many have been removed and replaced. It is vital that historic doors complete with architraves, locks, escutcheons, handles, catches and hinges are retained in situ or re-used wherever possible.

The variety of designs and the hierarchy of form and design detail, (e.g. houses having formal panelled doors in public rooms, ledged and plank doors in attics), that may be observed in a building add to the interest and explain the history of use.

Historic cupboard doors, including items such as hinges, catches, and locks are considered to be an integral part of the structure of the listed building, they are 'fixtures'. The removal or alteration of these doors would require Listed Building Consent.

If in doubt about the significance of these fixtures please [consult the Historic Buildings Officer](#).



*Internal door images used with permission of the owners*

The desire to introduce a uniformity of design throughout by the replacement of designs that may appear discordant should be avoided, since this could blur distinctions between phases of development of a building. Where it is clear that original doors have been replaced with inappropriate late 20th century designs then there may be a case for replacement.

### Door Furniture

This term covers items such as handles, locks, escutcheons, catches, hinges, letterboxes and knockers. All of these contribute to the interest and significance of historic doors.

The door case itself may also include associated items such as bell pulls or bell pushers, lanterns and boot scrapers.

Original items should be retained wherever possible.



### What permissions/consents are required?

All replacement of historic doors (internal & external), alterations and provision of new doors/doorways will require Listed Building Consent.

Planning Permission is not likely to be required for replacement/alterations/new doors in domestic properties.

All external replacement doors require Building Control approval. If they are being replaced with fully compliant modern doors, meeting all the current thermal and other Building Regulation requirements and they are being installed by an installer who is a member of one of the Competent Person installation schemes then the installer can notify the scheme who will issue a certificate of Building Regulation compliance to the homeowner. They will also notify the local authority that the works comply with the Building Regulations.

If however the replacement doors do not meet some of current building regulations, which will always be the case where single glazing is used or thinner double glazing than current standards, then a Building Regulations application will be required.

All new or enlarged doors will always require a Building Regulations application and cannot be certified through a competent persons scheme.

Certain internal doors also need to meet Building Regulation requirements and you should check with Building Control before carrying out works involving doors internally. For more information please [email](#) them.

Your attention is also drawn to the fact that where doors are currently fire doors, and this may not always be readily apparent in houses and flats, any replacement doors must also be fire doors. If those doors are fitted with self closers any replacement doors also should be fitted with self closing devices.

## What information should I submit with my application?

*Your application should include:*

- A completed application form for [Listed Building Consent](#) and/or [Planning Permission](#) (as required).
- 1:2500 location plan with the site outlined in red.
- In the case of **external** doors 1:200 or 1:500 block plan on which the position of the door(s) to be altered/replaced/added should be clearly marked. If a new door is to be inserted then there should be sufficient detail of the internal floor plan so as to understand the impact on the interior.
- In the case of **internal** doors a floor plan scale 1:100 or 1:50 shall be provided on which the position of all doors to be altered/replaced/added are annotated.
- Full drawn details of the proposed replacement door(s) including:
  - Name and address of building, contact details for client and/or agent or joiner
  - Scale bar or dimensions written on drawing and written scale
  - Elevation drawing of the building indicating which door(s) the application relates to
  - Scale drawings of the whole door
  - Scale drawings of the proposed sections of door frames, including, if applicable, any glazing and glazing bars
  - Details of the proposed timber to be used, along with details of proposed paint or timber finish
  - Details of door furniture e.g. letter boxes, locks, hinges
- A brief "Design and Access Statement" outlining
  - how old your building is
  - the type and age of the door(s)
  - a list of the door(s) that the application relates to
  - the reasons that replacement/alteration is needed
  - What advice you have previously had relating to the possibility of repairing the doors, and who the advice was from
  - Reasons why you consider the replacement door(s) will either preserve or enhance the appearance of the building
- An outline of any alterations that will be required to the fabric of the building in order to fit the new door(s)
- A photo of both sides of the whole door(s) as existing, and close up photos of existing door/frame, showing any areas that are rotten or damaged and significant features, eg. hinges, letterboxes, knockers, panels etc.

For an audio or large print version of this leaflet, please phone 01296 585454

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