

Guide to Repairing and Upgrading Windows in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

January 2025

London Borough of Islington

Introduction

Islington Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019, recognising the need to drastically reduce carbon emissions in the borough. The council has made a pledge to work towards being a net zero borough by 2030.

The retention, repair and sensitive retrofit of the borough's numerous historic homes including 2000+ listed buildings has a powerful role to play in achieving these targets. Many of these historic buildings are houses or residential buildings and the Council will support residents in making appropriate adaptations to improve energy efficiency and sustainability in their homes.

Upgrading windows is often a priority for residents considering retrofit works. Households living in listed buildings or conservation areas will need to consider how this work will affect the building's special interest and will often need to obtain listed building consent and/or planning permission before making alterations. Fortunately, there is a range of appropriate options available, and it is usually possible to achieve improvements in thermal efficiency and reduce energy bills without damaging the building or causing harm to its significance.

This guide will help households to identify the best option and make a successful application for listed building consent and/or planning permission.

Status of this Document

This document is published as an informal guide to repairing and/or replacing the windows in listed buildings and Conservation Areas. This edition was updated in January 2025 to reflect the latest policy and guidance.

The council is also developing a Climate Action Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) addressing sustainable development and climate action across the borough, and a Retrofit Handbook providing guidance on retrofitting homes. Both documents are subject to consultation and, once adopted, should be read in conjunction with this guide.

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1. How to use this Guide

If you live in a conservation area or a listed building, this guide will help you understand the different ways you can repair and upgrade your windows, what permissions you will need, and how you can make a successful application.

Carrying out maintenance and repairs will help to keep your windows in good condition and functioning properly. Overhauling or upgrading windows to make them more thermally efficient could help to reduce your carbon footprint and energy bills, and help with problems like condensation, draughts and noise. However, if your home is listed you will usually need to obtain listed building consent before starting the work. This guide summarises appropriate solutions and how to apply for consent, with links provided to useful resources and guidance.

This guide applies to listed houses and flats in listed buildings and homes in conservation areas. It does not cover large developments, changes of use, or commercial buildings. We recommend using Islington's pre-application advice service in relation to these types of development and obtaining appropriate professional advice when preparing an application.

You can find out whether your building is listed and read the list entry by searching the [National Heritage List for England](#) on Historic England's website. You can find out whether your building is in a conservation area on the Council's interactive map.

Building Control

This guide covers planning and listed building issues. If you are replacing a window you will also need to consider building regulations. Please see section 7.4 for more information.



Image 1. Typical windows in a listed building.

2. Choosing the right solution for your property

2.1 Listed buildings

There is a range of options available for upgrading windows. If you live in a listed building, you must choose solutions that will preserve or enhance the building, its features, and its heritage significance. The Council's approach when assessing proposals for window upgrades in listed buildings is summarised as follows:

- Historic windows make an important contribution to the significance of a listed building and should usually be retained. We recommend overhauling and carrying out repairs to these windows where required.
- Historic windows can usually be improved to achieve better thermal performance by draught-proofing, restoring or reinstating shutters, and/or installing secondary glazing. If there is no surviving historic glass it is often acceptable to replace glass in existing frames with thermally efficient glass or with slimline double glazed units (if the window frame can accommodate them).
- Historic windows that are beyond reasonable repair can be replaced with accurate copies, and windows that have already been replaced in their entirety with an accurate copy since the building was listed can be replaced again (if desired) with a new replica window. It is usually possible to incorporate slimline double glazed units in the replacement window.

- If historic windows have been inappropriately replaced or altered in the past in a way that detracts from the significance of the building (e.g. UPVC has been installed), it will usually be acceptable to replace them with well-designed slimline double glazed windows that replicate the appearance and design of the original more closely.
- New windows that have been added to the building more recently do not generally contribute to significance. This includes windows in extensions, roof lights, and non-historic patio doors. It will usually be acceptable to replace any of these with double glazed units subject to detailed design considerations.

The Council will have regard to guidance published by Historic England in [Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading \(Historic England 2017\)](#) and other relevant guidance published by Historic England when assessing applications. The legal and policy framework that underpins this approach is set out in more detail in section 5 of this guide.

Find out more

There is more information about windows in listed buildings and how they contribute to significance in [4. Assessing your Existing Windows](#).

Listed building consent is required for any work to a listed building that would affect its special architectural or historic interest. You may need to obtain listed building consent for improvements or alterations to windows. If you're proposing to replace windows, planning permission will usually be required in addition to listed building consent. Please refer to the detailed guidance in [3. What are the Options to Make Your Windows More Energy Efficient?](#) and [7. Applying for Consent](#) for more information about consent requirements.

2.2 Homes in Conservation Areas

If you live in a non-listed building in a conservation area, it will usually be acceptable to replace your windows. However, you will need to consider how the work will affect the character and appearance of the conservation area:

- If you live in a building that makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, it will usually be acceptable to replace traditional windows with well-designed double glazed windows. The replacement windows should closely match the original design and materials. This will mean replicating the glazing pattern of the historic window, and frame construction from traditional and sustainable materials (e.g. timber). For windows with glazing bars, it will usually mean incorporating integral glazing bars. Please refer to [3.6 Replacing Traditional Windows with Double Glazed Windows](#) for more details.
- If you live in a building that does not make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, or you want to replace a modern window such as a window in a recent extension, there may be scope to change the style or material. You will need to ensure the new windows would not detract from the appearance of the building or the character of the area. They should be appropriately designed and of good quality. Please refer to [3.7 Installing Contemporary Double or Triple Glazed Windows or Windows in a Different Material or Style](#) for more details.

If you wish to retain the existing windows, there is a range of good options available to improve thermal performance e.g. by draught-proofing, restoring or reinstating shutters, installing secondary glazing, and replacing glass in existing frames with thermally efficient glass or with slimline double glazed units. Please see [3. What are the Options to Make Your Windows More Energy Efficient?](#) for more information on the options available.

Find out more

More information about Islington's conservation areas is available on our [conservation areas web page](#). Refer to our conservation area design guides and appraisals for more information about each of our conservation areas including guidance on which buildings make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

If you live in a conservation area, you will usually need to obtain planning permissions to replace windows. However, planning permission is not usually required for improvements to existing windows or for installation of secondary glazing. Please refer to the detailed guidance in [3. What are the Options to Make Your Windows More Energy Efficient?](#) and [7. Applying for Consent](#) for more information about consent requirements.

3. What are the Options to Make Your Windows More Energy Efficient?

This section sets out the main ways in which you can improve the thermal performance of your windows and prevent heat loss. This is a quick guide, which summarises the available options. The following sections provide more detailed information on how to choose the right solution for your property, how to gain consent if it is needed and other considerations.



Image 2. Ornate arch window contributing to significance.

3.1 Repairing and Overhauling Windows

Usually acceptable in listed buildings	Usually acceptable for homes in conservation areas	Consent requirements
Yes	Yes	None
<p>Listed building consent is not needed for repairs that are carried out in situ without removing the window frame from the surrounding wall.</p> <p>Listed building consent is not needed for repainting windows in the same colour as existing. Repainting in a noticeably different colour requires listed building consent.</p> <p>Planning permission is not needed for repairing windows.</p>		

Repairs and overhauling will be appropriate in most cases. Traditional windows can almost always be repaired, even if in very poor condition.

Further details: All types of windows require regular maintenance to avoid the need for major repairs or replacement. Windows are often discarded unnecessarily because of minor defects, which is not sustainable and causes unnecessary cost and disruption. In many cases sympathetic repair using appropriate materials and techniques will restore them to working order (and improve their appearance and performance). This might include replacing broken sash cords or

hardware, removing excess paint build-up and repainting, replacing putty or broken panes of glass, joinery repairs including piecing in new sections of timber and resin repairs, and removing superficial rust and corrosion on metal windows.

Other considerations

- A well-maintained and repaired historic window may last longer than a modern replacement. Many historic windows were made with materials such as old growth timber that are no longer available. Sympathetic repairs will prolong the life of these materials, minimising environmental impact.
- You should seek advice from a joiner or craftsperson with relevant skills to carry out the work. Refer to section 9 for advice on how to find specialist help. There is detailed guidance on repair and maintenance of traditional windows in [Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading \(Historic England 2017\)](#)



Image 3. Defects to paintwork and putty are common and can be addressed with routine repairs.

3.2 Draught-Proofing

Usually acceptable in listed buildings	Usually acceptable for homes in conservation areas	Consent requirements
Yes	Yes	None
<p>Listed building consent is not needed provided that the draught-proofing would not be visible or harmfully weaken the structure of the window.</p> <p>Planning permission is not needed for draught-proofing.</p>		

Draught-proofing will be appropriate in almost all cases. It might not be appropriate in combination with secondary glazing. (Refer to section 3.3 below)

Further Details: Older windows are prone to heat loss through cracks and gaps. Simple draught-proofing is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to reduce heat loss through windows. It usually involves installation of inexpensive wiper seals (for sliding sash windows) or compression seals (where moving parts of the window close against the frame such as around a casement window).

Other considerations

- Research published by Historic England suggests that in traditional windows without draught-proofing, as much as half of all heat loss through the window could be as a result of air leakage, and draught-proofing will significantly reduce this.
- Some degree of ventilation is essential in older buildings to avoid moisture build-up and poor air quality. Draught-proofing will reduce air infiltration and it is important to make sure the room is still adequately ventilated.
- Refer to [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Draught-proofing windows and doors \(Historic England 2016\)](#) for more detailed guidance.

3.3 Secondary Glazing

Usually acceptable in listed buildings	Usually acceptable for homes in conservation areas	Consent requirements
Yes	Yes	Listed building consent
Listed building consent is usually required for installation of secondary glazing.		
Planning permission is not needed for secondary glazing.		

Secondary glazing is likely to be acceptable in almost all houses and residential buildings subject to appropriate design, due to its very minimal impact on the historic fabric of the building.

Further Details: Households should consider secondary glazing as an alternative to double glazing for historic windows. It can usually be installed without harming significance and with minimal disruption or risk. It can be as effective as slimline double glazing for reducing heat loss and is likely to be better than slimline double glazing at reducing noise. There is a wide variety of good quality secondary glazing products available on the market with good functionality and discreet appearance, including some that are designed to be mounted on the interior of the staff bead and are therefore compatible with traditional shutters.

Frames and glazing bars should line up with the existing window so that they are not visible from the outside. You will need to consider the characteristics of the existing window frame, window reveal and surround, and select a compatible product.

Lightweight unobtrusive metal frames are usually the most suitable and least noticeable. The colour and finish of the frame should be selected to match or blend in with the existing window frame and surround. Alterations to the existing window surrounds should be avoided.

Other considerations

- Some ventilation between the exterior and the air gap will limit the risk of condensation forming on the inner face of the primary window. To achieve this, it is often recommended that the primary window is not sealed or draught-proofed. The secondary glazing unit should be well sealed to prevent moist air from the room entering the air gap.
- Ventilation is essential in older buildings to avoid moisture build-up and poor air quality. Secondary glazing will reduce air infiltration and it is important to make sure the room is still adequately ventilated.
- Refer to [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Secondary glazing for windows \(Historic England 2016\)](#) for more detailed information.

3.4 Replacing and Upgrading Glazing Units Within Historic Windows

Usually acceptable in listed buildings	Usually acceptable for homes in conservation areas	Consent requirements
Yes	Yes	Listed building consent
Listed building consent is required.		
Planning permission is not needed.		

This will be acceptable where there is no surviving historic glass present and the existing window frames and glazing bars can accommodate the thickness and weight of the new glazing units.

Further Details: Thermal or low-emissivity (“Low E”) single glazing or slim section double glazed units can often be fitted into existing historic window frames to replace the existing panes of glass.

Low E single glazing is likely to be feasible in most cases, but applicants will need to check that the new glass is compatible with existing window frames and glazing bars; some of the products available are thicker than historic panes. New glass should be putty mounted in the traditional style.

It may not be possible to install double glazed units in small-pane sash windows from the late 18th and early 19th centuries because the size and depth of the rebate in the narrow glazing bars may not be sufficient to accommodate the additional thickness, and the frames might not be robust enough to support the considerable additional weight. It is more likely to be feasible in late 19th century sash windows that have larger panes, and in wooden or steel casement windows.

Replacing single panes of glass with double glazed units will add additional weight. The counterweights in sash windows may need to be adjusted accordingly

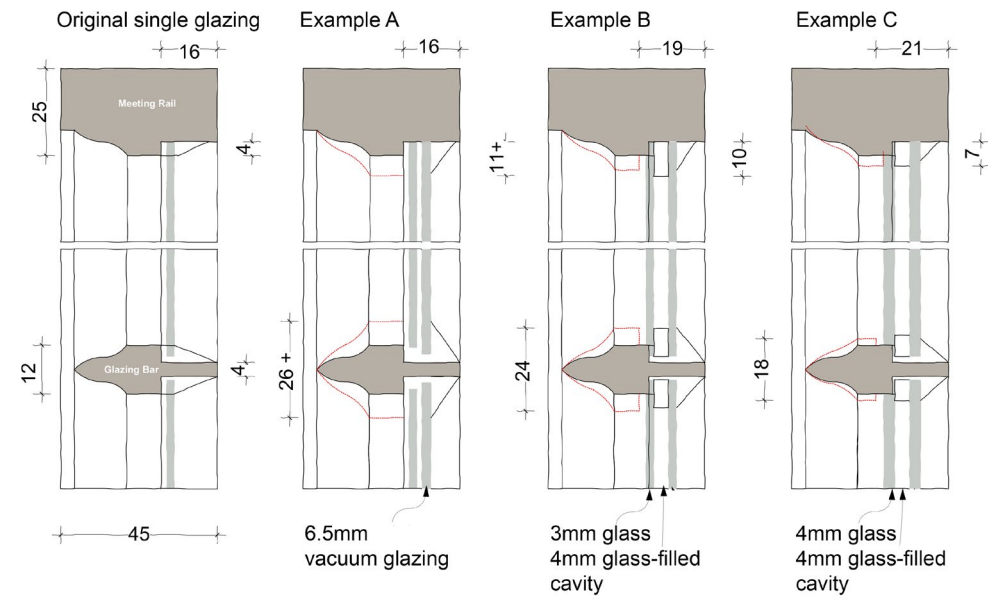


Image 4. Some historic glazing bars may not be able to accommodate double-glazed units.

3.5 Replacing a Historic Window in a Listed Building (incorporating slim profile double glazing where appropriate)

Usually acceptable in listed buildings	Usually acceptable for homes in conservation areas	Consent requirements
Yes – in some circumstances	Refer to 3.6 and 3.7 for advice on replacing windows in an unlisted building in a conservation area	Listed building consent and planning permission
<p>Listed building consent is required to replace windows.</p> <p>Planning permission may also be required. Refer to 7. Applying for Consent for more information.</p>		

Windows in listed buildings that contribute to special interest should usually be retained. Replacement will only be acceptable if a historic window is beyond reasonable repair, or if the existing window is a copy that was installed after the date of listing. These windows should always be replaced with an accurate copy.

For advice on replacing non-historic windows in listed buildings (such as windows in recent extensions, modern roof lights or modern patio doors) refer to [3.6 Replacing Traditional Windows with Double Glazed Windows](#) and [3.7 Installing Contemporary Double or Triple Glazed Windows or Windows in a Different Material or Style](#).

Further Details: In cases where the historic window is genuinely beyond reasonable repair it can be replaced with an accurate copy. (Refer to section 4.2 for details of what ‘reasonable repair’ means).

If a historic window has recently been replaced with an accurate copy, it can usually be replaced again (if desired) with an equally accurate new replica. This will apply in cases where the window has been lawfully replaced after the date of listing. (Refer to section 4.2 for details of how you can check this). The replacement window should match the form, detailing and operation of the original. The maker of the new window should accurately copy the profiles of all the window components including head, jambs and cill of the frame and the stiles, rails and glazing bars of the sashes or casements. If there is any historic glass remaining it should be carefully salvaged and reused.

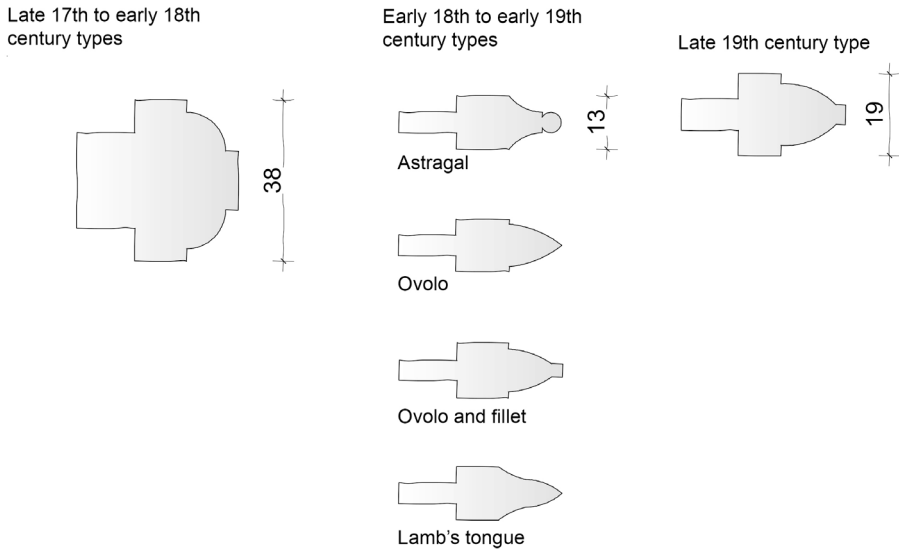


Image 5. Typical historic glazing bar profiles, which can be as narrow as 13mm. It may be necessary to make minor adjustment when replicating some types of glazing bar in order to accommodate double glazed units.

For typical sash or casement timber windows found in most of Islington's listed homes, it will usually be possible to incorporate individual slim profile double glazed units in the replacement window in place of single panes. These should always be putty mounted in integral glazing bars and the spacer bar inside the double glazed unit should match the colour of the window frame.

For timber windows, many firms of builders, carpenters or joiners will provide a bespoke service. When replacing small-paned sash window with narrow glazing bars it will usually be acceptable to make minor adjustments to the dimensions and profiles of glazing bars if this is needed to accommodate double glazed units. You will still need to replicate the original dimensions as closely as possible, and you should select the most appropriate type of double glazed unit in order to achieve this. 'Ultra-slimline' double glazed units (with a depth of 10 or 11mm) are now available, and many of these can be installed with narrow glazing bars that are very similar in profile to historic examples.

For steel windows, many traditional designs are still available as mass-produced items. It may be possible to incorporate double glazed units into the new frame, and some manufacturers will offer a double glazed thermally broken version of their traditional designs.

It won't always be possible to incorporate double glazed units. They are unlikely to be compatible with decorative or elaborate glazing patterns (such as those commonly found in fanlights above doors) or with stained or leaded glass. Atypical homes (such as converted churches or civic buildings) and buildings that are listed at Grade I or Grade II* may also require special consideration.

Other considerations

- Replacing windows in their entirety will be more disruptive than upgrading existing windows. Box frames for traditional sash windows are usually set behind brickwork and impossible to remove without also removing surviving shutters or timber window surrounds. It may be preferable to replace damaged sashes or casements while retaining the existing frame (which is often original historic fabric).

Joinery Cross Section

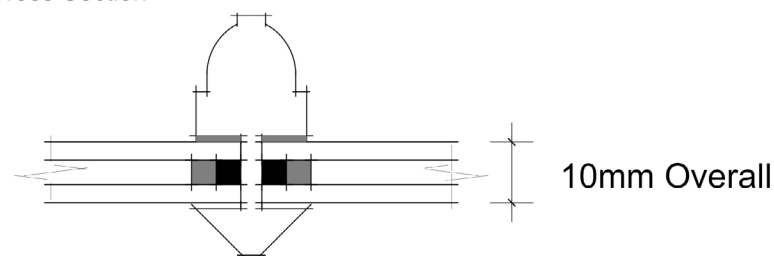


Image 6. Typical section detail showing an ultra-slimline double glazed unit mounted with putty in a replica glazing bar. The glazing bar profile is very similar to historic examples.

3.6 Replacing Traditional Windows with Double Glazed Windows

Usually acceptable in listed buildings	Usually acceptable for homes in conservation areas	Consent requirements
Yes – in some circumstance	Yes	Listed building consent and planning permission
<p>Listed building consent is required to replace windows.</p> <p>Planning permission will usually also be required. Refer to 7. Applying for Consent for more information.</p>		

For unlisted buildings in conservation areas that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance, replacing historic windows with well-designed double glazed windows will usually be acceptable.

You should also have regard to the guidance in this section if you are reinstating a historic window in a listed building that has been inappropriately replaced in the past, or if you are replacing a non-historic window in a listed building that has been designed to replicate a traditional window.

Further Details: Various double glazed windows designed to replicate the appearance of historic windows are available. ‘Slimline’ glazing units should usually be considered in the first instance as this will more closely replicate the original appearance.

The design, materials and detailing of the window frame, glazing and opening mechanism should replicate the original window. The spacer bar in the double glazed unit should match the colour of the window frame so that it is not noticeable. Visible trickle vents and rubber seals should be avoided.

If the original window has glazing bars, these should be accurately replicated. The layout and profile of new glazing bars should match the original as closely as possible and the window should usually be constructed with integral glazing bars (not with artificial glazing bars mounted on the surface of a larger glazed unit). This will usually require the use of slim-profile double glazed units. (Manufacturers generally offer ‘slimline’ glazed units of about 14mm-16mm thickness that are suitable for use with glazing bars).

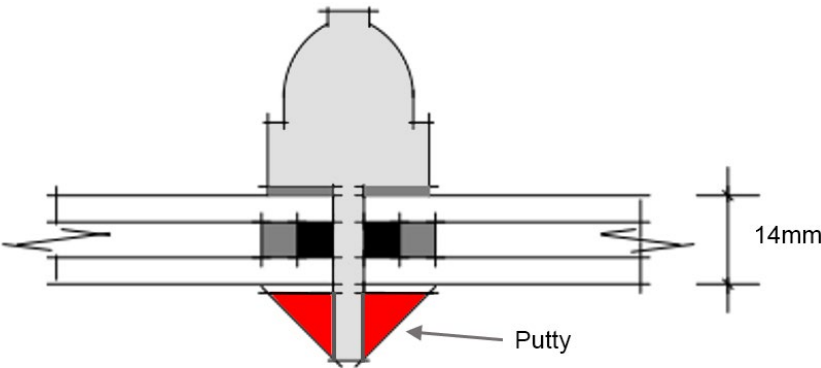


Image 7. Individual glazed units should always be putty mounted in glazing bars. Surface mounted artificial glazing bars are not appropriate.

If the original window does not have glazing bars, it may be possible to accommodate thicker double glazed units without compromising the appearance of the window.

Double glazed products designed to replicate common styles of metal casement window with thermally broken frames are also available.

Other considerations

- Replacing windows in their entirety will be more disruptive than upgrading existing windows. It may be preferable to replace sashes or casements while retaining the existing frame.



Image 8. The windows in the upper storey of this listed building have been inappropriately replaced in the past in a way that detracts from the significance of the building. Replacement with well-designed slimline double glazing would be appropriate.



Image 9. Slightly thicker glazed units may be appropriate in windows without glazing bars such as these late 19th century sliding sash windows.

3.7 Installing Contemporary Double or Triple Glazed Windows or Windows in a Different Material or Style

Usually acceptable in listed buildings	Usually acceptable for homes in conservation areas	Consent requirements
No (except in some limited circumstances)	Yes – in some circumstances	Listed building consent and planning permission
<p>Listed building consent is required to replace windows.</p> <p>Planning permission will usually also be required. Refer to 7. Applying for Consent for more information.</p>		

These types of window may be acceptable for unlisted buildings in a conservation area that do not make a positive contribution to character and appearance (e.g. recent infill developments) or when installed in a contemporary extension or addition to a historic house.

They will not usually be acceptable as a replacement for historic windows or as a replacement for new windows that are designed to replicate historic styles. For advice on appropriate replacements for historic and traditional windows refer to [3.5 Replacing a Historic Window in a Listed Building \(incorporating slim profile double glazing where appropriate\)](#) and [3.6 Replacing Traditional Windows with Double Glazed Windows](#).

Further Details: Standard double or triple glazed windows and alternative materials or styles are not appropriate replacements for historic windows as the appearance will be noticeably different. However, they may be acceptable for new windows or windows in recent extensions that are contemporary in style (including Velux-style roof lights) provided that the replacement windows are of an appropriate design and of similar quality to the existing ones, and would not cause any adverse impact on the setting or significance of the building. UPVC windows are unlikely to be acceptable in any circumstances.

It may be acceptable to change the style or material when replacing windows in non-historic buildings that do not contribute to the character of the conservation area or when replacing modern windows (such as windows in a recent extension). The new windows should not detract from the appearance of the building or the character of the area. They should be appropriately designed and of good quality. UPVC windows are unlikely to be acceptable in most circumstances due to concerns over poor appearance.

3.8 Internal Shutters

Usually acceptable in listed buildings	Usually acceptable for homes in conservation areas	Consent requirements
Yes	Yes	Listed building consent
Listed building consent is required to install, alter or remove shutters. Planning permission is not required for internal shutters.		

It will usually be acceptable to restore or reinstate shutters in listed buildings if they were an original feature of the room. It may be acceptable to install shutters to some historic windows even if this was not an original feature provided that this does not cause harm to significance.

Installing shutters or repairing existing shutters can also be a good option for unlisted homes in conservation areas.

Further Details: Shutters can reduce heat loss, particularly in combination with other measures. Internal shutters can be closed at night to retain heat, and during the day in summer to reduce solar gain. Many 18th and 19th century houses in Islington still have internal shutters. If these are in poor condition, they can usually be repaired and restored to working order.

If shutters were an original feature of the room but have been lost, it will usually be acceptable to reinstate them. Proposals should accurately replicate the original design as far as possible and should be supported by good evidence. Painted in’ shutters that will not open can often be found to be in good condition once the over-painting has been carefully removed.

It might be acceptable to install shutters even if this was not an original feature of the room. This would depend on the specific circumstances of the building and detailed design considerations. It is recommended that households considering this submit a pre-application enquiry so that Council officers can provide site-specific advice.

Other considerations

Curtains and blinds can also help to reduce heat loss and solar gain. They are a low-cost option that does not affect the historic building fabric.



Image 10. Traditional timber shutters with shutter boxes.

4. Assessing your Existing Windows

4.1 Identifying historic window styles and features

You will need to identify what kind of windows you have, and any other features of interest that might be affected. There are three main types of historic window commonly found in Islington's historic houses and residential buildings:

- **Sliding sash:** These have two vertically sliding sashes in a box frame. The sashes are hung with counterweights allowing them to be opened and moved independently. This style was widely used throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and is the most common type of window found in listed houses in Islington. Very early examples from the beginning of the 18th century had thick robust glazing bars to support small panes of (fragile) glass. Sash windows from the late 18th and early 19th century (common in Islington) have small panes of glass mounted in very narrow glazing bars. From the 1830s onwards, stronger plate glass became available allowing larger panes of glass to be used without the need for glazing bars. 'Sash horns' were used to strengthen these larger windows.
- **Wooden casement windows:** These windows are mounted on hinges at the top or side so they can swing open. This style of window was also used throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, especially for smaller houses and cottages, but sash windows were generally more prevalent. Casement windows became popular again in the early 20th century, for example in buildings influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement. In Islington these windows may be more commonly found in houses dating from the early 20th century.

- **Metal frame windows:** Metal frame casements have also been used for hundreds of years but became increasingly popular after the first world war as mass produced steel windows were developed by companies such as Crittall. Buildings dating from the 1930s onwards may have this kind of metal windows (especially larger blocks of flats).

Other common window-related features to look out for include French doors, internal shutters and shutter boxes, flower guards, stained glass or leaded glass and internal or external decorative window surround.

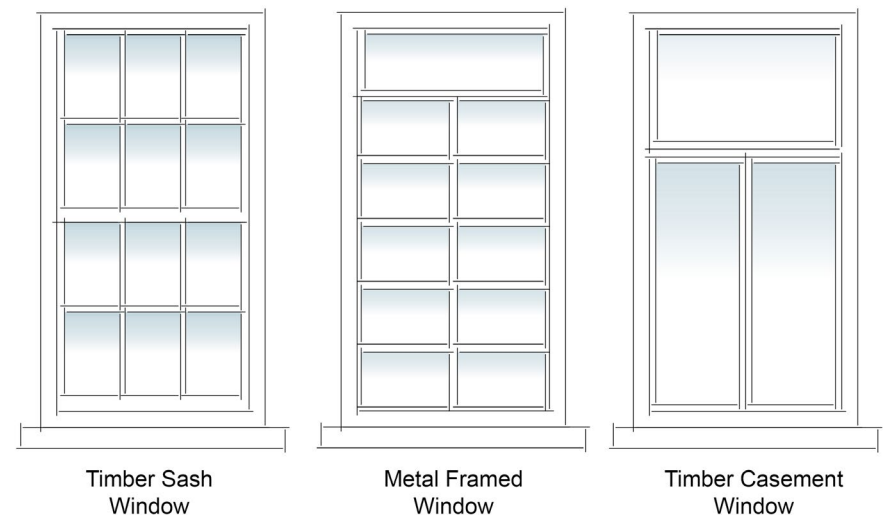


Image 11. The three common types of historic windows.

4.2 Assessing Significance

Planning policy requires that proposals affecting heritage assets preserve or enhance **significance**. Significance is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework as “The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.”



Image 12. Historic windows make an important contribution to Islington’s local character.

Historic windows in listed buildings and other historic features associated with the window (such as decorative surrounds and shutters) are of heritage interest and make an important contribution to the significance of a building. This includes windows that have been partially or completely replaced in the past following the original style. It is quite unusual for the original fabric of older windows to survive in its entirety. ‘Sacrificial’ elements such as putty and beading are designed to be renewed periodically, as is paintwork. Surviving historic glass is relatively rare, and often part or all of the timber frame will have been renewed in the past due to damage or decay. However, if this repair and renewal follows the original form and design then the window will still contribute to significance, and should usually be retained.

If a historic window has recently been replaced in its entirety with an accurate replica, the replica window will still contribute to the significance of the building (because it follows the original form and design) but it won’t contain any historic fabric. In these circumstances it can usually be replaced again (if desired) with an equally accurate new replica window, which will make a similar contribution to significance. This will usually only be acceptable in cases where the window has been lawfully replaced after the building was listed. You can find the listing date for your home by reading the listing information in the [National Heritage List for England](#) on Historic England’s website. You can [search the planning history for your address](#) on the Council’s website. If any windows have been replaced since the building was listed there will be a record of listed building consent being granted for the work.

New windows in listed buildings that have been added more recently are unlikely to contribute to the significance of the building. This includes windows in recent extensions, and areas where the building has been altered to create a new opening; non-original patio doors, and roof lights are common examples. It will usually be acceptable to replace or alter these windows. New windows are likely to have been designed to complement the character of the building (although this is not always the case). Replacements or alterations will need to be equally complementary so that there is no harmful impact on character, but they need not necessarily be identical. If the existing windows are poorly designed there may be an opportunity for improvement.



Image 13. Examples of recently added patio doors in listed buildings that do not contribute to significance.

The significance of conservation areas derives from the character and appearance of the area. Alterations that will affect the external appearance of your home, such as replacing windows, have the potential to affect the character and appearance of the area.

Historic buildings and other features such as layout, landscape elements and street furniture can all make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. There may be some elements within a conservation area that do not contribute to its significance such as modern infill buildings.

More information about Islington's conservation areas is available on our [conservation areas web page](#). Refer to our conservation area design guides and appraisals for more information about each of our conservation areas including guidance on which buildings make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

4.3 Assessing Condition

You should assess the condition of your existing windows to identify any repair or renewal work that is required. Common problems with timber windows include deteriorated paintwork or putty, wood rot, cracked glass, broken or absent sash cords and weights (meaning that the window won't open properly), excessive paint build-up and windows being painted shut. A common problem for steel windows is corrosion, warping or rusting of the metal frame.

Refer to [Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading \(Historic England 2017\)](#) for more detailed information on the history of windows, their significance, and their maintenance.

Consider how your existing windows are performing in terms of thermal efficiency. Traditional single glazed windows are not very efficient at preventing heat loss, but if the windows are not well-sealed, much of the heat loss could be as a result of air leakage rather than heat transfer through the glass and frame. Air leakage and draughts can also affect thermal comfort by making the room feel colder than it really is.

What is meant by 'beyond reasonable repair'?

Historic windows should only be replaced if it is no longer reasonable to repair them. Defects to glass, putty, paintwork and hardware/opening mechanisms can be addressed with routine repairs and renewal and do not necessitate replacement. Localised areas of damaged or degraded timber can also usually be rectified (either with a resin repair or by piecing in a new section of timber).

5. Retrofitting Historic Buildings – General Advice on Other Energy Efficiency Measures

The energy and carbon performance of most historic buildings can be improved, which will help them remain viable and useful now and in the future, as well as reducing energy use and supporting sustainability goals. When attempting to make older buildings more energy efficient a special approach is needed to ensure their value is sustained for future generations.

Getting the balance right (and avoiding unintended consequences) is best done with a holistic approach that uses an understanding of a building, its context, its significance, and all the factors affecting energy use as the starting point for devising an energy efficiency strategy. This is referred to as the ‘whole building approach’. This guide focuses on improvements to windows, but keep in mind that the best way to achieve your energy efficiency objectives might be with a combination of measures. [Whole Building Approach for Historic Buildings | Historic England \(Web page\)](#) explains the ‘whole building approach’ and best practice approaches to retrofit of historic buildings.

[Historic England Advice Note 18: Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency \(2024\)](#) is an excellent starting point for anyone considering retrofit works to improve energy efficiency in a listed building. Other useful resources are listed in [9. Useful Resources](#). It is strongly recommended that you seek appropriate professional advice before carrying out any work.

It may be helpful to think about the ‘whole life’ costs and benefits of retrofit work when deciding what is most appropriate for your home and your circumstances. This means considering the financial costs and environmental impacts of manufacture and installation, anticipated energy savings, the probable life span of the retrofit measures, and what will happen to materials and fixtures after they have reached the end of their useful life.

6. Legislation, Policies and Guidance

The advice given in this guide is based on a framework of relevant legislation, national and local planning policy and planning guidance, which is summarised below. This framework will be used to assess applications for listed building consent. Proposals that follow the advice given in the previous sections of this guide will usually be found to comply with the relevant policies.

Legislation:

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 creates a legal duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their features of special interest.

Section 7(1) says that authorisation (listed building consent) is needed to carry out any works for the demolition of a listed building or for its alteration or extension in any manner which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest.

National Policy:

Chapter 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 promotes the transition to a low carbon future. It says that the planning system should “shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; [and] encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings”

Chapter 16 promotes the desirability of preserving and enhancing the significance of heritage assets. It says that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation, that any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification, and that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Local policy:

Islington Local Plan (2023) Policy DH1 E says that the Council will conserve or enhance Islington’s heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Policy DH2 E says that proposals that harm the significance of a listed building (through inappropriate repair, alteration, extension, demolition and/or development within its setting) must provide clear and convincing justification for the harm.

Supporting paragraph 8.21 says that the special interest of a listed building may vary and will be assessed by an expert officer on a case-by-case basis. It lists aspects that are likely to contribute to significance and the list includes external elevations, architectural detailing, windows and doors, interior decoration and joinery.

Supporting paragraph 8.22 says that historic fabric is an important part of a listed building’s significance and that retention of as much historic fabric as possible should be the starting point for proposals.

Supporting paragraph 8.26 says that the integrity and authenticity of a listed building can be substantially harmed over time by the cumulative impact of works which would individually cause minor harm, and that works that undermine integrity and authenticity such as ad hoc or piecemeal alteration must therefore be avoided.

Islington Local Plan (2023) Policy S1 part A sets out the Council's aspiration to minimise adverse impacts on the environment and ensure sustainable design to reduce fuel poverty, improve long-term energy security and minimise contributions to climate change. **Part D** says the Council will work to improve the energy efficiency of the existing building stock.

Policies S2 and S3 set out specific sustainable design and construction requirements and standards for larger developments (including larger householder extensions) but there are no specific requirements for householder listed building consent applications or for householder planning applications that do not involve extensions.

Relevant guidance

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) Conserving and enhancing the historic environment gives further detail on the listed building consent process.

Conservation Principles, Policy and Guidance (2008, Historic England) sets out key principles for management of the historic environment including sections on understanding significance and on principles for decision-making.

Historic England Advice Note 18: Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency (2024) provides an overview of guidance on adapting historic buildings and the policy and regulatory context for making energy efficiency improvements and assessing impacts.

Historic England Advice Note 16 Listed Building Consent (2016) gives general advice about listed building consent as an application process, how to judge whether proposals need consent, and how to make informed applications. It includes the following staged approach to decision making:

- Understand the history, form and materials of the listed building, and its setting where relevant
- Analyse and understand its special interest
- Develop the proposal so as to conserve that special interest
- Work out whether the proposal would harm that special interest
- Consider alternatives which avoid or minimise any harmful impacts on special interest and take opportunities to better reveal or enhance it
- Justify any remaining harmful impacts
- Where harm is permitted by LBC to important elements of a listed building, an analysis and record of elements being lost may be made, disseminated and archived

Traditional Windows, their care, repair and upgrading (2017, Historic England) Provides detailed guidance on the significance of historic windows and appropriate ways to upgrade them for energy efficiency. It encourages the retention of windows that contribute to heritage significance and sets out a general approach for assessing proposals for listed building consent (which is in line with the approach set out in this guide).

7. Applying for Consent

7.1 Listed Building Consent

Listed building consent is required for any work to a statutorily listed building that would affect its special architectural or historic interest.

You must get consent before starting work. You could be liable for a criminal offence if you carry out work without getting consent (even if the work would have been considered acceptable).

Please refer to the detailed guidance in section 3 of this guide to find out whether the work you are considering will require listed building consent. There is more detailed information on this in [Historic England Advice Note 16: Listed Building Consent \(2021\)](#).

Proposals including replacement of windows may also require planning permission. Please refer to our [Permitted Development Guide for Net-Zero Works](#) to find out whether planning permission is required. See section 6.2 for more information.

If you need to make an application for listed building consent it should include the following:

All applications for works to windows:

- **Completed application form (signed and dated)**
- **A location and site plan:** This is to clearly identify the building affected. Your location plan needs to be a scaled plan of the site at 1:1250 or 1:2500 scale, with the boundary of the application site outlined in red. You can read this [national guide on how to prepare a site plan](#) and you can buy a plan on line.
- **Heritage Statement:** This document should describe the significance of the listed building (particularly those parts that would be affected by the proposal). As a minimum it should identify the listed building and any other heritage assets that might be affected, and should refer to the list descriptions available from the [National Heritage List for England](#). In addition, you should include information about the windows and any other features that would be affected (such as shutters and window surrounds) so that officers can understand the contribution they make to significance. This might include a written description, site photographs (internal and external) and other evidence as relevant.
- **Design and Access Statement (DAS):** This is a concise report in which the applicant explains how the proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting and how it will ensure adequate access for users. It must include an explanation of the design principles and concepts that have been applied, and how they have taken account of the special architectural or historic interest of the building, the physical features of the building that contribute to significance, and the building's setting. If the proposals

would affect how the building is accessed (for example if a door is to be replaced with a window or vice versa) then the DAS must explain the approach to access and how relevant Local Plan policies have been taken into account.

- **Schedule of work:** This is a list of all the work that you propose to carry out as part of the proposal. You can include details here on proposed materials and techniques, and any other details that cannot readily be shown on drawings.
- **Existing and proposed elevation drawings (showing the whole building):** These are needed to identify which windows are affected by the proposal. They should be accurate scale drawings (1:50 or larger) with a scale bar and unique drawing number clearly shown. All windows that would be affected by the proposal should be identified (e.g. with an annotation). Any windows proposed to be removed should be clearly marked in red on the existing drawings.

Proposals for secondary glazing:

- Elevation drawings for each window showing the layout and position of the proposed secondary glazing (so that officers can check that it would line up with the frame of the existing building and would not be visible from the exterior)
- Section drawings showing how the secondary glazing would be mounted in the existing window surround
- Product details for the proposed secondary glazing system including material, colour and finish, and details of how this would be fixed to the window surround

Proposals for Replacing glass in existing frames:

- Product and manufacturer details for the proposed new glazing product
- Details of how this would be fitted in the existing frame (e.g. putty mounted in existing glazing bars)

Proposals for replacement windows:

- Detailed drawings of existing and proposed windows showing the windows and masonry/timber surround (elevations shown at a scale of 1:20 and sections, details and special features shown at a scale of 1:5 or larger) with proposed materials, colours and finishes clearly marked
- For proposals for like for like replacement of a historic window, evidence that the existing window is beyond reasonable repair (such as a report from a joiner or surveyor) or evidence that it has been replaced since the building was listed (usually details of the relevant listed building consent)

Proposals involving removal or alteration of internal historic shutters, shutter boxes, panelling or window surrounds:

- Existing and proposed internal elevations and sections with any areas proposed for demolition or removal clearly marked in red on existing drawings

7.2 Planning Permission

You may need to apply for planning permission to make changes to your windows. Improving existing windows (including repair, draft proofing, secondary glazing and replacing glass) does not require planning permission. However, replacing any kind of window with a double glazed window will need planning permission unless it is classed as 'permitted development' by the [General Permitted Development Order \(GDPO\)](#).

Replacing existing windows in a single family house is usually classed as 'permitted development'. This means the work can be carried out without applying for planning permission provided that it meets the criteria set out in the GDPO. However, in most of Islington's conservation areas this class of permitted development has been removed or restricted by an Article 4 direction meaning that planning permission is required.

Replacing windows in a flat, a house converted to flats, or a non-residential building is not permitted development and planning permission is required.

More information on this is available in the [Permitted Development Guide for Net-Zero Works](#).

7.3 Other Considerations

Building Regulations

Under the Building Regulations a new window is a 'controlled fitting' and would generally need to meet certain standards covering heat loss, safety, ventilation and spread of fire. A 'certificate of compliance' can be issued either by using an installer who is registered with a competent person scheme such as FENSA or by making an application to the relevant Building Control body.

If windows are being replaced, they need to meet the requirements of Building Regulations Part L (energy efficiency). However, certain classes of historic buildings are expressly exempted from the need to comply where compliance would unacceptably alter their character and appearance. These include listed buildings, buildings in conservation areas, and scheduled monuments.

This guide concerns planning matters only. Please seek separate advice on building regulations from the [Building Control Service](#).

8. Frequently Asked Questions

How can I find out if my building is listed?

You should consult the [National Heritage List for England](#) which can be searched on Historic England's website.

I live in a listed building. Can I still upgrade my windows to improve energy efficiency?

Yes – there are lots of good options available to improve thermal performance without harming the character of your historic house. You must obtain listed building consent before starting work if it is required.

I live in an unusual building and this guidance doesn't seem relevant. What can I do?

This guide focuses on the most common styles of window found in peoples' homes in Islington, but some buildings will require special consideration or bespoke solutions. In these cases we recommend reading [detailed guidance published by Historic England](#), making use of the Council's [pre-application advice service](#), and seeking appropriate professional advice.

How long will it take for my application to be decided?

It usually takes 8 weeks from the date you submit the application. If there are any problems with your application (for example information is missing, or you need to amend the proposal) then it is likely to take longer.

How can I make sure my application is successful?

The information you will need to submit is set out in section 7 of this guide. If you provide this, and your proposal is in line with the guidance in this document, then listed building consent will usually be granted. If you are proposing a different solution that is not recommended in this document then you will need to demonstrate that it complies with the policies and guidance summarised in section 6 of this guide.

What consents do I need?

This depends on what you are proposing to do. Please refer to section 3 and to the detailed advice in section 7. **If listed building consent is required, you must secure this before starting any work. You could be liable for a criminal offence if you start the work without getting listed building consent.**

Can I install double glazing?

You can usually install double glazing in unlisted homes in conservation areas. If you live in a listed building you can usually install double glazing in new/modern windows (such as roof lights) and windows in recent extensions. Historic windows should be retained wherever possible, but it may be possible to install slimline double glazed units in place of the existing glass. If the historic window is beyond repair and must be replaced (or if it has previously been replaced) then you can usually replace it with a replica that incorporates slimline double glazing.

9. Useful Resources

9.1 Where to get advice and help

Islington duty planning service – net zero and sustainability

This is a free, appointment only service for residents and businesses considering energy efficiency measures. You will receive informal advice on general planning issues including what consents are needed and how to submit an application. [Details of the duty planning service are available on the Council's website.](#)

Islington pre-application advice

If you would like more detailed advice on planning and listed building matters that is specifically tailored to your home/your proposal, you can make use of the Council's pre-application advice service. [Details of the pre-application advice service are available on the Council's website.](#)

Historic England pre-application advice

Historic England will be a statutory consultee for proposals affecting grade I and II* listed buildings. They offer a free pre-application advice service. [Details of the Historic England pre-application service are available on the Historic England website.](#)

Professional advice and services

This guide covers planning and listed building matters only. You should always seek appropriate professional advice when planning works to your home.

- **The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC)** is the UK's professional body for historic environment professionals. They provide links to several [public registers for specialist contractors or tradespeople](#) on their website and business listings for accredited historic environment service providers via their [HESPR database](#).
- **The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)** is the UK's professional body for architects. The [RIBA Conservation Register](#) includes architects specialising in all aspects of historic building conservation.
- For comprehensive domestic retrofit proposals consider getting advice from a qualified retrofit coordinator. The **British Standards Institution (BSI)** recommends minimum qualifications for retrofit coordinators in their [PAS 2035 document](#). For [traditionally constructed dwellings](#) this includes holding a Level 3 Award in Energy Efficiency for Older and Traditional Buildings.
- Advice on building regulations and building control is available from the [Council's Building Control service](#).

9.2 Resources

Legislation and planning policy

1. [The Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#)
2. [The National Planning Policy Framework 2024](#)
3. [The Islington Local Plan 2023](#)

Key guidance

4. [Islington Permitted Development Guide for Net Zero Works \(2024\)](#) explains what consents are required for various energy efficiency and retrofit measures.
5. [Planning Practice Guidance – Historic environment](#)
6. [Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment \(Historic England, 2008\)](#) provides key principles for management of the historic environment.
7. [Historic England Advice Note 16: Listed Building Consent \(2021\)](#) gives general advice about listed building consent, when it is required and the application process.
8. [Historic England Advice Note 18: Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency \(2024\)](#) provides guidance on adapting historic buildings including the policy and regulatory context for making energy efficiency improvements and assessing impacts.

9. [Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading \(Historic England 2017\)](#) contains detailed information on the history and significance of traditional windows and guidance on maintenance, repair and upgrading.
10. [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Draught-proofing windows and doors \(Historic England 2016\)](#) is part of a suite of guidance documents on energy efficiency in historic buildings and provides detailed advice on draught-proofing.
11. [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Secondary glazing for windows \(Historic England 2016\)](#) is part of a suite of guidance documents on energy efficiency in historic buildings and provides detailed advice on secondary glazing.
12. [Retrofit and Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings \(Historic England website\)](#) provides guidance on retrofit including links to a range of resources and information.
13. [Modifying Historic Windows as Part of Retrofitting Energy-Saving Measures \(Historic England website\)](#) provides guidance on upgrading windows as part of retrofit works including links to a range of resources and information.

Research and reports

14. [There's no place like old homes: Re-use and recycle to reduce carbon \(Historic England 2019\)](#) highlights the importance of our built historic and its vital role in the journey towards a low carbon future.
15. [Research into the Thermal Performance of Traditional Windows: Timber sash windows \(Historic England 2018\)](#)

16. [Improving the Thermal Performance of Traditional windows: Metal-Framed Windows \(Historic England 2017\)](#)
17. [Thermal Performance of Traditional Windows: Improving the Performance of Traditional Windows, Technical Paper 01 \(Historic Environment Scotland 2010\)](#).
18. [Slim-profile Double Glazing: Thermal Performance and Embodied Energy, Technical Paper 09 \(Historic Environment Scotland 2008\)](#).

Other sources of information on retrofitting historic buildings

The Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance (STBA) is a collaboration of organisations that act as a forum for sustaining and improving traditional buildings. [Stbauk.org](https://stbauk.org)

19. [Planning Responsible Retrofit of Traditional Buildings \(STBA 2015\)](#) provides guidance on the risks and complexities of retrofitting older buildings.
20. [The responsible retrofit guidance wheel \(STBA\)](#) is an interactive tool allowing you to understand how retrofit measures interact, funded by the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) is a building conservation charity. They offer a range of advice on their [public website](#) including detailed advice on windows and improving energy efficiency.

21. [SPAB Technical advice note: Repair of Wood Windows](#)

To assist with the retrofit process, and to establish robust processes for managing risks, the **British Standards Institution (BSI)** has collaborated with Government to develop the BSI Retrofit Standards Framework

22. [PAS 2035 \(BSI 2023\)](#) specifies requirements for responsible retrofit of dwellings.