

# Windows in historic buildings

## guidance for owners and occupiers

Original windows contribute greatly to the appearance and interest of historic buildings. Their removal can spoil the character and erode the value of individual houses and entire streetscenes. The Council therefore expects original windows to be retained.

Windows are composite structures made of timber or metal and glass and each element can be repaired individually, which makes repair and refurbishment a cost-effective option compared to wholesale replacement.

The value of historic windows does not only lie in their aesthetic quality and craftsmanship but in the material itself. 19th century (or earlier) timber for joinery was grown slowly, thus it is very dense, and dried slowly which ensured good quality. Such quality can rarely be matched by the timber available today on the market. Original windows might be 100 or more years old - overhauled and repaired they will have the ability to last a lot longer. No replacement material, in particular modern materials, such as aluminium or PVCu, can compare in quality and longevity.

### **Upgrading and improving thermal efficiency of historic windows**

Improving thermal performance is important in terms of reducing your carbon footprint and increasing personal comfort. Historic windows can be draught-proofed, secondary glazed or provided



with shutters or thick curtains to make them more thermally efficient. English Heritage

has issued specific guidance including a short online video which explains the benefits of various options:

[http://www.climatechangeandyourhome.org.uk/live/research\\_generic.aspx](http://www.climatechangeandyourhome.org.uk/live/research_generic.aspx)

### **Replacing historic windows**

If the original window does need to be replaced, it should be in the original style and material. It should be replaced exactly 'like for like'; NOT by 'lookalikes' e.g. top hung 'sliding sash' windows in lieu of the authentic pulleys and cords.

### **Timber Specification**

There are many softwoods today on the market that are not suitable for outside use, and their improper use - with subsequent early failings and high maintenance requirements - has brought

wood into disrepute as a material for external joinery. Do ask your supplier about the timber's suitability for outside use, its durability, its moisture content and likelihood of movement. Good quality softwoods for external joinery on the market are Douglas Fir or Columbian Pine.

Please note that removal of original timber windows and replacement with PVCu to elevations visible from public areas is unlikely to be granted planning permission.

### **Applications for alterations or replacement of existing windows**

Upgrading historic windows by way of draught-proofing or secondary glazing does not require planning permission. If you intend to change the material or style, including the change to double-glazing, owners or tenants of dwellings in

conservation areas where an Article 4 Direction applies, or of commercial properties or flats are required to seek planning permission. For Listed Buildings, an application for Listed Building Consent is required.

Applications for replacement windows should be accompanied by drawings to a scale of 1:10 that shows the window elevation and a section. Joinery details should be to a scale of at least 1:5 and that of the glazing bars 1:1.

Application forms can be picked up from the Planning Information Services Desk or are available to download from the Council's website [www.lewisham.gov.uk](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk) or the Planning Portal. To have the forms sent or emailed contact Planning Information Services on 0208 3147400 or email [planning@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:planning@lewisham.gov.uk).

#### **Window types: The sash window**



The most common style of windows within the borough is the double-hung vertical sliding sash window made from timber. Depending on age and style of the building, the glazed area of the sashes can be subdivided with glazing bars into smaller panes.

#### **The casement window**



Casement windows are side hung but vary in design with some having slim glazing bars or leaded lights dividing the pane.

The usually slim glazing bars or leaded lights cannot be replicated in double-glazing. In these cases the Council would always encourage the repair of these windows and upgrading with secondary glazing.