

Repair or Replacement of Windows and Doors



St Albans
City & District Council

1. Introduction

This leaflet gives advice on the consents needed from this Council to alter or replace your windows or doors.

You may need:

- Planning permission
- [Listed building consent](#) (if the property is a listed building)
- [Building Regulations](#) approval

Replacement windows and doors may not always be necessary. Few alterations harm the character and appearance of property as much as poor changes to windows and doors, which may reduce the value of a property. Careful repair, if possible, should be considered before replacement, especially where historic details or quality materials survive. Original windows and doors in period buildings are always attractive to buyers.

2. Thinking about new windows and doors

The most common reasons for wanting new windows or doors are a desire for better insulation, draught proofing or replacement of rotten wood. Before you replace your windows or doors, often at considerable expense, you may wish to think about:

How old are my existing windows or doors? Are they of historic value? Do they add value to my house?

Quality historic timber windows and doors can survive for hundreds of years and often outlast modern replacements. The seasoned timber which was used to make older windows is normally of far better quality and more durable than modern timber. That is why, if properly cared for, historic windows will

last far longer and it is sensible and practical to preserve such windows.

Does the design of my windows and doors reflect the age and character of my house, and if so, how can I try to protect this and the value of my property whilst improving energy efficiency?

Do my windows or doors match those of adjoining or adjacent properties and if so how can I ensure my new windows or doors do not devalue my property or those in the area generally?

Do my windows or doors actually need replacing or would it be more cost effective and sustainable to repair them?

In many cases repairing and upgrading existing windows, or introducing secondary glazing, draught proofing strips, shutters, or even thick curtains, can be more sustainable and cost effective than a double glazed replacement.

If you think that a wooden window or door is rotten please check all of the wood – often only a small lower section needs replacing, not the whole window or door. The replacement of windows and doors is often carried out unnecessarily when they could easily be repaired by a good carpenter. Always get at least one quote for repair as it usually works out cheaper. Specialist companies are available who refurbish, repair and draught-proof sash windows in-situ or offsite. Original metal windows are just as important and can also be repaired and refurbished by specialist companies.



How long will it take for any savings in my heating costs to pay for the cost of the units?

Installing secondary internal glazing provides effective insulation for much less than the cost of a new double glazed window and helps to retain the character of your property. Most heat loss is, however, around the edges of the opening sections and can largely be eliminated by draught-proofing. This can be done by a specialist company but there are also several simple and inexpensive methods available for a d-i-y solution.

3. Do I need planning permission to replace windows and doors?

Like-for-like replacements

You will not normally require planning permission for like-for-like replacements, i.e. with windows and doors of exactly the same design, materials, colour and method of opening. Care should be taken to ensure that any replacements are exact copies. For instance, a change from single glazing to double glazing would normally require the glazing bars of a window to be thicker to hold the sealed glass unit, and this would not be considered to be an

exact copy. A change of material from timber to Upvc would not be considered a like-for-like change.

13. Declaration
I/we hereby apply for planning permission/consent as described in this form and information. I/we confirm that, to the best of my/our knowledge, any facts stated are genuine opinions of the person(s) giving them.
Signed - Applicant: _____ Or signed - Agent: _____

14. Applicant Contact Details
Telephone numbers
Country code: _____ National number: _____ Extension number: _____
Country code: _____ Mobile number (optional): _____
Country code: _____ Fax number (optional): _____
Email address (optional): _____

15. Agent Contact Details
Telephone numbers
Country code: _____ National number: _____
Country code: _____ Mobile number: _____
Country code: _____ Fax number: _____
Email address (optional): _____

16. Site Visit
Can the site be seen from a public road, public footpath, bridleway or other public land?
If the planning authority needs to make an appointment to carry out a site visit, whom should they contact? (Please select only one)
Contact name: _____
Address: _____
Telephone: _____

Replacements which are not like-for-like

Provided that the new windows and/or doors “do not materially affect the external appearance of the building”, replacement windows and doors in buildings, including flats, maisonettes and commercial properties, will often not require planning permission. If the new windows or doors materially affect the external appearance of the building then they will be considered to be development. If works are not [development](#) then planning permission is not required.

You will however often still not require planning permission to alter the windows or doors in your home even if they do materially affect the external appearance of the building. If your property is a single house or bungalow (i.e. not a house converted from shops, storage/distribution buildings or agricultural buildings), altering your windows or doors is '[permitted development](#)':

- a) [If the materials used are of a similar appearance to the existing materials.](#)
- b) If the house or bungalow is not affected by an [Article 4 Direction](#) which restricts permitted development rights for houses. These are associated with some conservation areas. Two of our largest conservation areas affected by Article 4 Directions are around Sopwell Lane and Fishpool Street, but there are others. You can check whether your property is affected by using the [Local Information Service](#) on the Council's website.
- c) If the house or bungalow has not had its permitted development rights relating to alterations removed by a condition attached to an earlier planning permission. You can check the planning history of your property on the Council's website either by using the [Local Information Service](#) on the homepage of the Council's website or by using the [advanced planning application search facilities](#). The 'Decision Notice' will show the conditions attached to any approved development.

4. Do I need listed building consent to replace my windows and doors?

Listed building consent will almost always be required to alter windows or doors on a listed building, but will not normally be required to repair windows or doors.

In listed buildings think about:

- Is repair possible? This is the preferred option. Historic windows and doors are of considerable aesthetic and historic value. If they have lasted to the present day they are usually of exceptional quality or craftsmanship. Unnecessary destruction of historic fabric is not acceptable.
- Matching materials should always be used for repairs.
- The use of uPVC is almost always unacceptable.
- Double-glazing or factory-made standard windows are rarely acceptable.
- Draught proofing or secondary glazing may be better options (these may or may not require listed building consent).
- If repair is not viable then identical replacements will almost always be required.



The Council also has available a free guidance leaflet for the owners and occupiers of listed buildings which outlines the purpose and effects of listing.

5. Building Regulations

Replacement windows and external doors have come under [Building Regulations](#) control since 2002. Property owners have to either seek Building Regulations approval or use a contractor who is registered on a government approved 'competent person's scheme' for this type of work.



If the work is only to replace the glazing and not the frame of a unit then it is not controlled under the Regulations and you do not need to make an application to Building Control. The replacement of a door without replacing its frame is similarly not controlled.

The replacement of a door and its frame needs to comply with the Regulations but if the door together with its frame has not more than 50% of its internal face area glazed then you do not need to make an application to Building Control.

As the owner you are ultimately liable for ensuring that your replacement windows and external doors comply with the Building Regulations and have the appropriate approval or are registered under one of the above schemes. When you sell your property your buyer's solicitor will ask the seller to provide evidence of this. Before you sign a contract to buy replacement windows or external doors you should check that the installer is able to self-certify.



6. Within Conservation Areas and Locally Listed Buildings



Conservation areas are those areas which have been designated as having special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which deserves special protection. Individual buildings contribute greatly to the overall character of these areas. Within conservation areas, those buildings that are deemed to make a positive contribution have been identified and are detailed on a 'local list'.

Within conservation areas the Council does not have control over alterations which do not need planning permission.

It is therefore important that everyone plays a part in avoiding unsympathetic alterations which can be damaging to the historic street scene. Few alterations harm the character and appearance of property as much as poor changes to windows and doors. You should think particularly carefully about whether you replace your windows if you live in a terrace or group of similar looking houses as changes to one house can destroy the regular window pattern of the street.



Windows

Original sash or casement windows are very important to the appearance of your property and should be retained wherever possible. If your windows have already been changed and need replacing again, please consider reinstating traditional windows.

If you replace your windows, please note the following:

- Modern uPVC or aluminium windows are not a sympathetic replacement for traditional painted wooden windows; they lack the fine detailed mouldings which give a quality appearance. The frame and glazing bars of plastic windows are often wide and clumsy when compared to timber frames and glazing bars.
- Stained wood is not a sympathetic replacement material for painted wood.

The guidelines below should help you in the selection of your new windows:

- Try to replicate any original, historic windows as closely as possible.
- Do not change the overall size and shape of the window opening. Remember that many windows were set back in their openings, and replace windows with the same set-back rather than installing windows flush with the outer face of the wall.
- Choose a style and opening method which matches the original window. If the existing windows are vertical sliding sashes, replace with vertical sliding sashes – these are available as sealed double-glazed units. Do not be tempted to replace vertical sliding sash windows with modern top or bottom hung sash windows.



- Choose a material and finish which matches the original windows (usually painted timber). Replace timber with timber, metal with metal.

- Try to match the width and profile of the original window frames and glazing bars. Consider how the glazing bars are to be designed. These may have to be a certain thickness to hold sealed double-glazed units. Will these be too chunky or cut down light? This can be minimised by careful design of the glazing bars and beading, or sometimes by applying the glazing bars externally.



- Where old glass survives it can be retained and reused in a replacement window. Old glass has an interesting appearance compared with the dull and flat appearance of modern glass.
- Do insist that, in casement windows, opening lights are the same size as the non-opening or 'fixed' panes. The window will appear more balanced.
- Avoid adding fake heritage features such as adding lead to windows or adding 'bulls-eye' glass.
- Consider how the glass will be held in – as traditionally by putty or by glazing beads, and how will these be designed? Glazing beads can be designed to hold double-glazing without standing proud of the frame or being overly chunky.
- Are you thinking of using trickle vents? These can spoil the appearance of otherwise well designed windows.

Doors

Original doors are very important historically and architecturally and should not be replaced unless absolutely beyond repair. Door repair is effective and usually cheaper than a replacement. Please retain the original door furniture, i.e. door knobs, handles, letter boxes etc. as these are often attractive and irreplaceable.

If your original door has been lost, please consider reinstating a traditional door. In the past each period had specific styles of door and these should be carefully respected when considering any replacement. Many companies manufacture a range of traditional doors, and reclaimed traditional doors are widely available from salvage companies.

If you replace a door please note that, as with windows, uPVC and other non-wood doors cannot match the detailing and overall appearance of traditional painted wooden doors.

The guidelines below should help you in the selection of your new door:

- Try to replicate any original historic door as closely as possible.
- Do not change the overall size and shape of the door opening.
- Panelled or boarded doors based on original designs are normally best.
- Painted (softwood) timber rather than stained hardwood is more likely to be appropriate.
- If a new panelled door is proposed, authentic panels with appropriate mouldings will look far better than beading stuck on a flush door to create the illusion of a panel.



Planning and Building Control

St Albans City & District Council
St Peter's Street
St Albans AL1 3JE

Telephone: **01727 866100**

Email: planning@stalbans.gov.uk
buildingcontrol@stalbans.gov.uk

If you need this information in an alternative format, such as Braille or in another language, please call **01727 819494**



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www.stalbans.gov.uk