

HOW TO ADDRESS SOME COMMON DEFECTS

Roof Coverings

Roof coverings wear out quicker than other parts of a building and your own roof may have been recovered already if the building is more than 60-100 years old. Always try to match the original materials. Do not replace hand-made clay tiles with machine-made ones and certainly not with concrete ones which may devalue your property and certainly harm its character. If the roof covering has already been replaced with a modern equivalent like concrete tiles, this is an ideal opportunity to consider replacing these with more original, natural materials. Minor repairs will not need permission but the complete replacement of the covering on a listed building is an alteration requiring Listed Building Consent.

Thatch should be replaced with thatch and the local materials should be used. Do not replace straw thatch with water reed or vice versa. The thatch details should be of the local vernacular, not to some fancy detailed design not normally found locally. Ask your Conservation Officer for advice.

Chimneys

Chimneys also tend to need regular attention as they are affected by the chemicals present in the smoke as well as by the weather. Repointing of the brickwork or stonework should be done using lime based mortar to a traditional finish. Be careful not to copy an area of pointing which is already out of character with the age of the building and the bricks. The principle of mortar jointing between bricks or stones is that the mortar should always be slightly weaker than the bricks or stones themselves. That way, the water which is absorbed by the bricks or stones can escape via the joints. Hard cement mortars cause water to become trapped behind the pointing which often results in the bricks/stones themselves decaying.

The joint between the roof and the chimney is a very vulnerable area. Again this should be repaired in like for like material. This is a skilled craftsman's job whether the material is lead, tiling or a mortar fillet. It is generally expensive to get works done to roofs because of the need for long ladder work or

scaffolding, so be sure to get a skilled person to do the work and ask your Conservation Officer for advice.

Rainwater Gutters and Downpipes

These are generally in cast iron on older properties although they might be in lead or even oak on listed buildings. Cast iron is more expensive than modern plastic but it does last a very long time with simple regular maintenance and should be considered an important element of the character of your dwelling. Retain your cast iron rainwater goods and replace plastic ones with the cast iron when you get the opportunity. The support brackets are also often a part of the character of the dwelling to be retained or replaced like for like. Iron brackets can generally be made by a local blacksmith to match any that may have worn out and there are foundries which still make cast ironwork in all shapes and sizes. Lead gutters or downpipes should only be repaired by skilled craftsmen and will last for hundreds of years.

Brickwork

Brick walling normally needs little maintenance. It does not need repointing until the mortar is falling out or powdery to a depth of up to 1cm and even then generally only isolated patches will need attention. Original mortar pointing should be considered an historic part of the dwelling. There is never any excuse for completely repointing for appearance sake. To own and occupy an old house is normally a privilege and the worn exterior is a fundamental part of its character.

It is a common saying that "historic properties often suffer more from having too much money spent on them than from having too little" and this is particularly true of repointing of brickwork. As explained in the above paragraph on chimneys, repointing in mortar that is stronger than the bricks themselves can cause serious decay to the very brickwork you are seeking to protect. Poorer pointing can also make the joints become more dominant than the historic bricks themselves.

If you believe your house needs some repointing please do ask your Conservation Officer for detailed advice and remember that to incorrectly repoint a

listed building is an alteration for which Listed Building Consent would be required.

The painting of brickwork with waterproof materials can cause dampness to be trapped inside the wall. Only paint areas that are already painted and only use porous paint. This is really another job best not to be started without full and proper advice. Changing the colour of a listed building is considered to be an alteration for which a Listed Building Consent will be required.

The traditional method of painting brick, stone or rendered walls was to use a limewash. This is a semi-waterproof material that allows water to evaporate whilst still giving some protection and decoration.

Timberframes

Both external and internal framework timbers need to be treated as originally intended. It is not generally appropriate to expose internal structural timbers which were previously hidden. You can usually tell which timbers were meant to be exposed because they have an element of decorative finish to them like a simple chamfer or moulding to the edges. Beams that have nails or nail holes from laths should be left plastered over. Oak beams were not normally painted or stained internally or externally but were left to weather naturally. If exposed beams have been decorated over this can sometimes be removed by careful use of poultice type strippers. Grit-blasting should never be used as it destroys the surface of the timber and to grit-blast timbers in a listed building is a serious prosecutable offence. Decayed timbers can usually be repaired by having a new timber scarf jointed in but this is a highly skilled craftsman's job not to be attempted by the normal jobbing builder let alone by an unskilled householder. External timbers can often have gaps around them made good with traditional lime mortar and tiled slip infills but get advice first and only trust the job to a known skilled craftsman. Old beams should not be filled with resin or other modern fillers.

Infilled panels in timber framed buildings need careful treatment. Plastered panels should be decorated with a lime wash which forms a sacrificial protective coating to be renewed very regularly. This will bond

correctly with the original lime plaster. Waterproof sealers or masonry paint should not be used on lime plaster walls or panels.

To alter the character of a listed building by painting previously unpainted walls or by applying a different colour scheme is an alteration needing Listed Building Consent. This similarly applies to removing paintwork, plaster or rendering from existing wall surfaces of listed buildings.

Doors and Windows

Traditional doors and windows should always be repaired rather than replaced if at all possible. Skilled craftsmen can insert new sections of timber using a traditional slanted form of joint. To replace traditional timber doors and windows with modern materials such as PVCu or aluminium seriously detracts from the character of the dwelling. Seek advice from your Conservation Officer and remember that window salesmen are selling their products for their own benefit not yours. It is very likely that the loss of original windows or doors to even an unlisted dwelling in a Conservation Area may depreciate its value due to the loss of traditional character. If you live in a Conservation Area and are considering changing your doors or windows it is advisable to contact the Conservation Officer for further advice as to whether a planning application would be required for such works.

Dampness in Buildings

Dampness can often be cured to a major degree but cannot always be eradicated completely. The starting point must be to identify the source of the dampness. The wall, floor or other element must then be allowed to dry out before any new decoration is done. There is no point treating and redecorating a damp wall if the source of the water penetration is not addressed.

Common causes of dampness in buildings are poor ventilation, high soil levels around a building, leaking or blocked gutters and downpipes, cracked or worn flashings around chimneys and valleys and the presence of external cement rendering or waterproof painting. Isolated areas of dampness may be straightforward to resolve but if you do have a damp problem do seek advice from your Conservation Officer not just from a dampproofing contractor.

The insertion of a damp course may possibly be treated as a repair to a listed building but check first with your Local Authority. The removal of large areas of plaster and replastering with modern hard plaster is a listed building alteration that your Conservation Officer may advise against.

Further advice can be obtained from the conservation and design team at:

Conservation & Design
Planning Services
Seaclose Offices
Fairlee Road
NEWPORT
Isle of Wight
PO30 2QS

01983 823552

E-mail: conservation@iow.gov.uk

Website: www.iwight.com/conservation

List of useful addresses:

Society for the Protection
of Ancient Buildings
37 Spital Square
London
E1 6DY

The Victorian Society
1 Priory Gardens
Bedford Park
London
W4 1TT

The Georgian Group
6 Fitzroy Square
London
W1P 5DX

C20th Society
70 Cowcross Street
London
EC1M 6EJ

Please note, the Local Authority has further information available in the form of leaflets (available from Seaclose offices, Newport).

Leaflet: CON7

CONSERVATION & DESIGN

LIVING IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS

COMMON DEFECTS



PLANNING SERVICES