

THINKING OF BUYING A LISTED BUILDING?

Within Surrey Heath there are Listed buildings and Locally Listed buildings. If you are thinking about buying one, you may find these notes helpful, before making your decision.

What is a Listed Building?

A listed building is one that is included on a list compiled by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Such buildings are listed for architectural, historic or technological reasons. They are a unique record of the art and craftsmanship of earlier generations. The total number of listed buildings represents only a small percentage of the national building stock. There are currently 173 listed buildings in Surrey Heath. They are a dwindling resource which cannot be replaced. They must therefore be protected for the benefit of this and future generations.

What are the responsibilities of owning a Listed Building?

Listed buildings are a joy to own. Owning them does, however, bring extra responsibility and expense. Owners are obliged to ensure that buildings are properly maintained. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) can act against the owner if it is concerned about the condition of a particular building. Repairs usually have to be carried out using traditional methods and materials. Very often specialist craftsmen have to be used. This can be costly and time consuming. (Small grants are sometimes available for such work in recognition of these particular requirements and costs).

I like the building but want to alter it to suit my needs

Do not buy a listed building in the hope that you will get consent for extensions, alterations or development. You may end up being disappointed but discover this too late in the day.

If you are thinking of buying a listed building that does not meet your specific requirements, particularly in terms of the space provided, consider carefully if it is the right building for you. It would be better to look for a larger or **unlisted** building. Leave the smaller listed buildings for those who do not need extra space.

Listed buildings are not museum pieces frozen in time. They can be updated, for example with a new kitchen or bathroom, re-wiring, plumbing, or an extension. However, any such works must not harm the historic or architectural character of the building and you should check with a Planning Officer. Listed building consent is required for any works which affect the character of the building. This is in addition to any planning permission required.

Many buildings have been altered over the years. Some, however, do not lend themselves to alteration. Special care needs to be taken when considering alterations or extensions. It is important to protect the very reason why the building was considered worthy of listing in the first place. If all the buildings are extended with each generation there will be no more small scale historic buildings left. For this reason the desirability and need for extensions and other alterations have to be considered very carefully.

Stricter controls are also exercised in respect of new development in the grounds, for example garages, covered swimming pools and enclosed tennis courts in order to protect the setting of the listed building.

Before you buy a listed building that does not meet your specific requirements, talk to a Planning Officer about whether your proposal is likely to receive support.

REMEMBER:

- Owning a listed building is a pleasure and a responsibility.
- Even minor works of alteration can require listed building consent.
- Unauthorised works to a listed building is a criminal offence.
- Listed buildings must be kept in a good state of repair. Additional advisory leaflets are available on request.
- The ability to extend is by no means guaranteed and many listed buildings are not capable of further extension if the historic character is to be protected for future generations.
- If the building is not big enough for you then look for a larger one to avoid disappointment if you cannot extend.
- Talk to the LPA for informal advice if you are unsure, before committing yourself to purchase.

What is a 'Locally Listed' Building?

In Surrey Heath buildings of local architectural or historic significance are "locally listed". They provide much of the local character of the Borough and should be protected and retained whenever possible. Works to locally listed buildings require only the normal planning permission. In considering such applications however, special regard will be given to retaining the character and appearance of the building.

For further advice or information on historic buildings please contact: Stephanie Hewitt at Surrey Heath Borough Council, Knoll Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3HD. You can also telephone her on 01276 707245 or email her on Stephanie.Hewitt@surreyheath.gov.uk.

Advice is also available from:

Martin Higgins, Surrey County Council Historic Buildings Officer.
Tel: 0208 541 9416 or email Martin.Higgins@surreycc.gov.uk.

