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LISTED  
BUILDING  
*GUIDE*

A full guide to buying or owning a listed building



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# Introduction

Buying or owning a listed building can be a daunting prospect. There are obligations and responsibilities that come with it and all the information can feel overwhelming. As Sussex Heritage award winners for our work with listed buildings we're well-versed in the dos and don'ts, as well as how you look after your listed building.

This guide has been created so you have all the information you need, covering everything from damp-proofing and electrics to the key considerations you need to think about.

If you still have questions or you're looking for advice, our team are on-hand to offer you expertise and guidance. Get in touch using the information below.

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# What does it mean if my property is listed?

Listing marks and celebrates a building's special architectural and historic interest. The older a building is, as well as how many buildings there are like it, contribute to whether it is listed. As a general rule of thumb, any buildings built before 1700 that are like their original condition are likely to be listed. Buildings less than 30 years old are not normally considered to be of special architectural or historic interest because they have yet to stand the test of time.

There are three different categories of listed buildings. Each category comes with its own rules regarding the extent of alterations and works that can be performed. If you're considering purchasing a listed building, you'll need to familiarise yourself with the following terms:

## *Grade I*

Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest. In England, only 2.5% of the buildings listed fall into this category. Across Sussex there are several Grade I listed buildings including Glynde Place in Lewes, The Royal Pavilion in Brighton, and Arundel Castle.

## *Grade II\**

Grade II\* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest. In England, only 5.8% of listed buildings are within this category.

## *Grade II*

The majority of listed buildings in England fall into this category and are the most likely grade of listing for a home owner.



*Owning a listed building doesn't mean you won't be able to make any changes, but it does mean that listing building consent must be applied for in order to make any changes which might affect its special interest.*

The local authority makes these decisions to ensure any changes balance the site's historic significance against other issues, such as its function or condition.

Don't let this put you off, owning a listed building is a unique opportunity and they are to be enjoyed. Besides, there are lots of ways you can make updates and changes while still conforming to the listed building requirements.



# Understanding your listed building

*Owning a listed home is both a privilege and a responsibility.*

While its status brings prestige and increases the property's value, it does place restrictions on what you can and can't do.

Listing covers a whole building, including the interior unless parts are explicitly excluded in the listing entry.

**This means it usually covers:**

- Any object or structure fixed to the building
- Any object or structure within the curtilage of the building

For example, loose furnishings like your furniture are not covered by the listing process, but items fixed to the building such as light fittings may contribute to the special interest of the home. Decorative clay floor tiles and ironwork within the property's boundary are also usually included.

Before purchasing a property, always check what's included in your listing with the local planning authority.

At this stage, it's also important to find out how your building has been built. For example, buildings dating before the First World War were built either with solid masonry walls or with timber frame and infill panels. Information like this can help you understand the potential challenges around upkeep, as well as issues you are likely to encounter.

Through your local authority you should also be able to gather all the information about previous work that has been conducted. This information is incredibly valuable as it can give you a clear idea of big projects that have been previously restored.



# Preservation and maintenance techniques

When owning a listed building, you'll likely be faced with some of these common challenges when it comes to preserving and maintaining your home.

## Windows



*Windows are a common source of wear, damage and decay, but replacing them isn't always straight forward.*

Depending on the type of windows your property has, the best way to minimise the significant costs associated with replacing them is by maintaining them. We'd recommend that you carry out regular inspections of your windows to check for:

- Soft areas of rot a vulnerable joints
- Blistered or flaking paintwork
- Loose or missing putties

If you do spot any of these issues, it's easier to repair

them rather than replace them. Sash windows can be removed from the box frame to aid repairs, though removing casement windows can damage the window and the adjacent area so it's best to do these while in place.

Given that most heat loss from windows is from draughts rather than through the glass, consider draught-proofing your windows and if you're looking at double glazing options, you should explore secondary glazing first as it avoids the need to replace or alter the window.

# Damp-proofing



*Damp can be one of the biggest concerns when buying a listed property but the key to this is getting a correct diagnosis.*

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You'll need to enlist the help of a qualified architect or surveyor with specialist experience to confirm if your home has damp problems as finding the cause of the problem can sometimes be the hardest part.

There are also different types of damp to be aware of:

- Rising damp
- Penetrating damp
- Condensation

Many damp problems are the result of poorly maintained gutters and downpipes so if you suspect you have damp, then it's worth looking at this first. Regular checks are key to spot these problems early on so the problem doesn't escalate.

If damp isn't treated it can also lead to further problems like timber decay and insect attacks. This can cause serious damage so if you're concerned, it's always best to seek expert advice.



# Electrics



*Although it's unlikely that electrical repairs will impact the character of the building when carried out correctly, you may still need listed building consent.*

Work like this requires a much higher level of attention to detail and delicacy as quite often the wiring has been neglected and is outdated.

If you're looking to install, replace or upgrade lighting, power, or fire alarms, you'll

need to get specialist consent to ensure the work you want to carry out is in keeping with the historic nature of your building. Works need to be carried out in such a way as to not damage the historic fabric of the house.



# Plumbing



*One of the biggest worries when purchasing a listed building is the plumbing!*

After all, until the late 1800s, most houses didn't have inside bathrooms or toilets. If your home already has existing bathrooms and you're only looking to replace the fittings, that should be fairly straightforward. But if the work you want to do requires you to install new pipes or extra equipment, then you'll need to think

about where the new pipes will be installed so they're not damaging the fabric of the house.

When it comes to bathrooms it's important to note that if it already has original Victorian fittings and decoration these might be part of the reason your building has listed status so it's always best to check this.



# Key considerations

## *Before buying:*

### **Local area:**

Research the local amenities, services, and community

### **Survey:**

Hire a qualified surveyor to conduct a thorough assessment

### **Conservation officer:**

Consult with a conservation officer for advice on potential changes

### **Listing status:**

Confirm if the property is listed and its grade.

### **Research:**

Understand the different listing grades (I, II\*, II) and the restrictions associated with each

### **Budget:**

Determine your budget for purchasing, restoration, and ongoing maintenance

### **Legalities:**

Check for any legal restrictions or planning permissions required for alterations

### **Insurance:**

Investigate specialist insurance to cover the property's unique features

### **Condition:**

Assess the property's current condition and potential restoration needs

### **Historic records:**

Research the property's history, previous alterations, and ownership

## *During purchase:*

### **Legal advice:**

Engage a solicitor experienced in dealing with listed properties

### **Listed building consent:**

Obtain necessary permissions from the local council

### **Negotiations:**

Negotiate purchase terms, considering restoration costs

### **Valuation:**

Get a professional valuation that factors in the property's historic value

### **Surveys:**

Conduct building and structural surveys to identify issues

### **Searches:**

Perform local authority searches to identify any planning constraints





# Key considerations

## *After purchase:*

### **Listed building consent:**

Obtain permission for any planned alterations

### **Restoration specialists:**

Hire experienced craftsmen for repairs and renovations

### **Materials:**

Use appropriate materials that match the property's historic character

### **Maintenance plan:**

Develop a long-term maintenance plan to preserve the property

### **Regular checks:**

Inspect the property regularly for signs of decay or damage

### **Insurance review:**

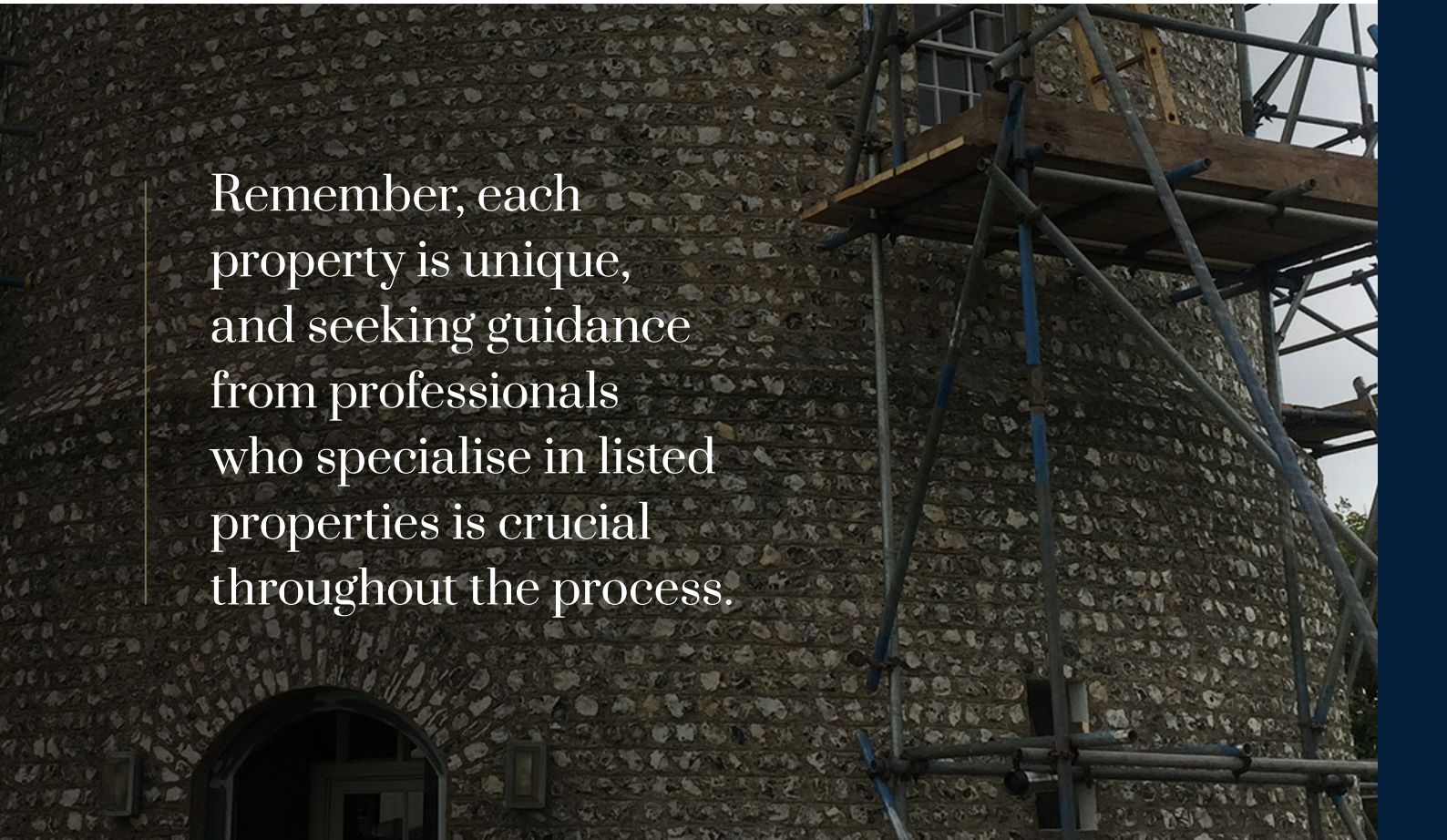
Regularly review insurance coverage to ensure adequate protection

### **Documentation:**

Keep records of all work done, permissions obtained, and expenses incurred

### **Community engagement:**

Participate in local heritage initiatives and share the property's history



Remember, each property is unique, and seeking guidance from professionals who specialise in listed properties is crucial throughout the process.

# Questions to ask your surveyor

*When enlisting a surveyor, you need to ensure they have the relevant expertise and experience so they can give you the best advice on preserving the character of your building.*

Here's a list of some of our must-ask questions when engaging a solicitor.

**Can you share some examples of listed buildings you've worked on before?**

Carry out your own due diligence and make sure you're confident in the experience they have.

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**What are the conditions of my listed status? What will / won't I be able to do?**

Understanding the restrictions that come with owning a listed building are key to knowing whether this is the right move for you.

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**Can you identify and explain any alterations or extensions that have been made to this property already?**

Given that any previous work will become your responsibility, it's important to check that all work completed obtained the relevant authorisations.

**What are the possibilities for extensions / alterations on this property?**

If you've got big ideas to turn the property into your dream house, it's best to get a thorough understanding of the changes you can make so you're not disappointed in the long run.

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**Taking an initial look at the property, what will need repairing or looking at right away and do you have an idea on costs?**

If you're purchasing a listed property, the likelihood is that it's already a significant purchase. You'll want to know what initial investments you're likely to need early on, to really consider if this is the right move for you.





# How can we help?

*We've worked on numerous Grade I, II\* and II listed properties, period, and historic houses, converting and renovating these to become new homes to live in, creatively meeting the new demands of today.*

We know how important it is to take the proper care and use traditional methods when working on these buildings which is why we've been trusted by some of the most prestigious buildings across Sussex.

With unparalleled experience undertaking structural, internal, and external listed building renovations, conserving original features, renewing structural oak frames, retrofitting heating and power systems, as well as extending properties, you can trust us to deliver excellent work. We're passionate about preserving techniques for future generations and can help you meet the

requirements of renovating your listed building.

Did you know that in 2018 we proudly received the Small Scale Residential Award from Sussex Heritage Trust for our extensive work on Grade II listed building, 'Wellands' in Laughton, Sussex. The brief was the conversion of the milking parlour and creamery, with the addition of a new link structure, to form a two-bedroom dwelling. In conjunction with the designers, GM Moore & Associates, the inhabitable but dignified brick building became a functional, energy efficient, family home, nestling in the lush surrounding countryside.







# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What about mortgages? Is there anything special I need to know?**

You can still apply for and receive a mortgage for a listed property. But be cautious, some lenders will ask you to make alterations before funds are released, and it's very important that you don't proceed on the recommendation of your mortgage company without seeking specialist advice.

## **Is it extremely expensive to own a listed property?**

There are significant costs involved when owning a listed property. Maintenance and repairs that are in keeping with traditional methods can be more expensive. It's also worth noting that local conservation officers can request repairs if they don't believe the property is being maintained properly. However, you may be able to obtain specialist grants for some of the work, so make sure you do your research.

## **Can I get normal home insurance for a listed building?**

Something unique about owning a listed property is that in the eventuality of let's say a fire, the insurance claim would include the local authority's conservation officer who would ultimately get to decide if the property is to be rebuilt, how it is to be rebuilt and what methods are used. It is vital that you get appropriate cover for a situation like this, so that your insurer covers the full cost regardless of who's making the decision.

## **Can I extend my listed property?**

This all depends on the requirements of your listing, as well as gaining the relevant planning permission. An experienced surveyor will be able to advise you on what you can and can't do to the property you wish to buy.



# Contact Us

If you still have questions or you're looking for advice, our team are on-hand to offer you expertise and guidance. Get in touch using the information below.

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