

Guideline Leaflet LB07: Building Materials and External Fittings in Listed Churches

The whole of the listed building, its grounds, boundary walls, fixtures and fittings are covered by the listing. This leaflet offers guidance on external maintenance and alterations.

This Guideline Leaflet is regularly reviewed and updated. To ensure that you are using the most up to date version, please download the leaflet from the BUGB website at www.baptist.org.uk/resources

The date on which the leaflet was last updated can be found on the download page.

LB07: Building Materials and External Fittings in Listed Churches

INTRODUCTION

These Notes are provided by the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee to assist Baptist Trust Companies, churches and their advisors.

The leaflets in this series are:

- LB01 *Introducing the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee*
- LB02 *Applying to the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee*
- LB03 *Professional Advisors and Applications to the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee*
- LB04 *Listed Buildings Application Form*
- LB05 *Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme*
- LB06 *Looking after your Church Buildings*
- LB07 *Building Materials and External Fittings in Listed Buildings*
- LB08 *Furnishings in Listed Church Buildings*
- LB09 *Photographic Recording*
- PC03 *Five Year Inspection Reports – Church Buildings*

SCOPE OF LISTING

The whole of the building, its grounds and boundary walls is included in the statutory listing and cannot be altered without consent.

The listing of a church or chapel covers more than just those elements (eg windows, doors) noted as being of special importance. It is not just the structure and finishes of the building, but also objects or structures within the building.

It is not just the external shape and design of the building that is important, fittings, historic, and architectural details are important too.

The original building may have been constructed in a particular kind of stone, with wrought iron rainwater goods including guttering and downpipes and roof tiles that reach the end of their useful life. However, selecting appropriate replacements is important. The fact that a property is listed means appropriate and suitable materials must be selected for any repair or alteration.

Our leaflet LB08 *Furnishings in Listed Church Buildings* focuses on internal alterations but it is vital to remember that alteration or removal of any items usually requires consent from the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

REPAIRS

Popping down to the local DIY store for replacement materials if your church is a listed building is not a good option. Before any repairs are carried out a careful evaluation is needed.

Can the existing materials be restored?

Can some of the original materials be retained even though repair would involve the introduction of new materials?

Are the original materials still available?

These are questions that the church needs to consider in detail in consultation with their professional advisors. It would be appropriate for the church to consult an experienced conservation architect or a surveyor with particular knowledge of listed buildings. The local authority conservation officer should also be able to help.

The fact that a window or a length of guttering has apparently reached the end of its useful life is not sufficient reason for a reckless and careless repair or for original materials to be replaced by an inappropriate modern substitute.

There are occasions when modern materials need to be used, but this should be done carefully after all other options have been considered.

EMERGENCIES

In urgent cases where properties have been damaged by flood, lightning, arson or another unexpected event churches should act as quickly as possible to make the building safe and water tight.

As soon as possible you should seek guidance from a suitably qualified surveyor or architect with experience in conservation about the best ways to conserve the historic fabric and repair the damage.

The fact that an emergency has occurred is not an excuse for using inappropriate materials for a permanent repair, but obviously the best possible practical arrangements need to be made to ensure further damage is avoided.

It is important to bear in mind that the purpose of the Heritage Protection system is the preservation and protection of the buildings so unjustified or inappropriate change should be avoided. Changes to a listed building need permission and unauthorised alterations are illegal, and could lead to a criminal conviction.

WALLING MATERIALS

Different kinds of stone have different levels of durability. The least durable walling materials have a life span of less than 100 years but the most durable will probably last for more than 250 years.

The wear and tear in walling materials is probably most obvious in exposed positions such as window reveals, sills, and cornices.

Where damage has occurred detailed guidance from a qualified architect or stonemason should be sought. Where it is necessary to let in new sections of stone where old materials have decayed then this needs to be done sensitively with a full record of the repair being kept, either in the form of drawings or a photographic record, or both.

It is important that appropriate mortar is used. Usually this will involve preparing some form of lime mortar, although there are different compositions for different situations.

The fact that walling materials have reached the end of their useful life does not mean that modern materials can be substituted without thought, care, and planning. Wherever possible stone should be renovated and repaired. Replacement should be a last resort and may need listed building consent.

ROOFING MATERIALS

Once again the lifespan of different materials will vary. Some have an expected life of less than 100 years but the most durable West Mulland and Welsh Slate can last for more than 250 years.

It is very important to ensure that any replacement roof materials are appropriate.

A range of roof slates are available but it is important to understand that not all slates have the same level of durability, finish, nor are they of the same colour. It is vital that appropriate roofing materials are selected, for reasons of durability and appearance.

Where changes are being made to roof coverings it is essential to take appropriate professional advice about the roof structure itself. Differences in the weight of roof coverings will affect the need for appropriate support structures for the roof to ensure that there is no damage to the stability of the building overall.

RAINWATER GOODS

Most older buildings were fitted with cast iron rainwater goods and correctly supported, re-painted and maintained these can last for up to 150 years. However, they will eventually wear out and replacement materials have to be obtained.

The plastic fittings that are often used on residential properties, or modern rainwater goods used on new buildings are not suitable for a listed building.

Advice should be obtained as to a suitable alternative, usually metal. This is why it is so important to have a suitably qualified conservation professional acting as an advisor to the church. If this is simply a repair then advice is still important. Sometimes the local authority conservation officer can help.

Plastic gutters and downpipes are not acceptable because they have a completely different appearance, and are not generally felt to be sufficiently durable.

WINDOWS AND GLASS

Many churches look at their old windows in despair and see them as a major problem. For listed buildings the quick and easy option of using UVPC replacements is not available. These are not suitable for a listed building. If they are used a church is likely to be asked to remove them and reinstate the windows using traditional and appropriate materials.

It is not simply a question of selecting the appropriate glass, but it is also important to ensure that an appropriate design is used. Window types vary according to the region and its building tradition. Detailed professional advice is needed.

Paint is usually the correct finish for timber windows; staining is not a traditional finish and should not normally be used. However, it is important to note that some early windows of oak were commonly lime washed or left unpainted and advice should be taken from a suitably qualified professional before repairs are made.

Many churches suffer vandalism and want to install some kind of window protection to protect the glass, which can often be quite old and valuable in itself.

Whilst there is sympathy for churches, there is a temptation to act hastily. Unsuitable window protection can be unsightly and detract from the appearance of the listed building. The church would need to take urgent advice in these circumstances, from a suitably qualified professional with experience in conservation, from the local authority conservation officer, and English Heritage.

Although the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee may be able to agree to emergency action being

taken, this would need to be followed by a retrospective application for full permission, including a full package of twenty-five sets of detailed drawings and specifications. This kind of 'emergency process' would only be possible in exceptional circumstances, but we do realise that some churches face significant problems with vandalism, and that this can sometimes arise unexpectedly because of changes in local circumstances.

Churches should take advice and consult their property trustees before taking urgent or emergency action.

Churches often indicate that the glass cannot be easily replaced on a like for like basis. This is no reason to destroy the whole window and churches should explore ways to obtain glass from a specialist supplier as well as renovating the window and retaining as much of the original glass as possible.

Questions of condensation and insulation are also modern concerns and specialist advice may be needed as to the best way to preserve the glass, ensure its beauty can be appreciated as well as providing appropriate levels of insulation for comfort.

DOORS AND DOOR FURNITURE

Many listed buildings have solid doors. Many congregations are keen that their church should be seen as active within the community. There is often a desire to 'open up the church' with the creation of a new set of doors, often incorporating glass panels. The intention is to allow the activities happening within the church to be visible to the local community. This change can also introduce more light and be a helpful part of a more comprehensive renovation and refurbishment programme.

However, it is important for churches to understand that what may seem to be 'just an old door' can have significant historic merit. Not only may the door be very old, it may also be a continuing example of earlier carpentry methods and contemporary design. The presence of old door furniture (for example, handles, hinges and locks) are also of historic importance and great care should be taken to preserve these wherever possible.

Doors and window openings establish the character of an elevation and should not generally be altered in their proportions or details.

Porches are sometimes an important feature of an elevation and their detailing should always be respected. Open columned porches of the Classical type should not normally be enclosed but should be left open. Where new porches are considered they need to be acceptable, with their design being undemonstrative so as not to spoil the integrity of the façade.

External decoration needs to be considered carefully, with appropriate choice of materials, paint and colours.

RAMPS

Some churches are able to improve access to their buildings by using temporary ramps. These are put in place when a service or other activity is in progress and can be very useful. It is important that care is taken to ensure the ramp is of a suitable gradient, and that it does not become slippery when wet.

Sometimes churches want to make a permanent alteration so as to improve access, particularly for those people who need to use a wheelchair.

Advice should be taken from a suitably qualified architect or surveyor as to the best way to create a ramp in a way that does not detract from the overall appearance of the listed building. This can be a difficult balance to achieve and requires technical knowledge and creative design.

In considering where a ramp should be situated, a full evaluation of the whole property should be

undertaken. It may be possible to achieve a better outcome overall by creating an access to the side or rear of the property. However, this needs to be balanced with the need for the church to be welcoming to all its visitors.

The Equality Act 2010 requires churches (and other service providers) to make reasonable adaptations to accommodate disabled people. This may include providing a ramp, but this is not always possible. Churches should read our guidelines leaflet L12 *Churches and Disability Issues* and take advice from the organisations mentioned within the leaflet who offer excellent guidance to local churches about the best way to approach this problem.

However, it is very important that churches realise that just because they need to make alterations because of the Equality Act 2010 they are not exempt from the need to obtain listed building consent before any changes are made.

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London Baptist Property Board	London Baptist Association Unit C2 15 Dock Street London E1 8JN Telephone: 020 7692 5592
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This is one of a series of *Guidelines* that are offered as a resource for Baptist ministers and churches. They have been prepared by the Legal and Operations Team and are, of necessity, intended only to give very general advice in relation to the topics covered. These guidelines should not be relied upon as a substitute for obtaining specific and more detailed advice in relation to a particular matter.

The staff in the Legal and Operations Team at Baptist House (or your regional Trust Company) will be very pleased to answer your queries and help in any way possible. It helps us to respond as efficiently as possible to the many churches in trust with us if you write to us and set out your enquiry as simply as possible.

The Legal and Operations Team also support churches that are in trust with the East Midland Baptist Trust Company Limited.

If your holding trustees are one of the other Baptist Trust Corporations you must contact your own Trust Corporation for further advice. A list of contact details is provided above. If you have private trustees they too should be consulted as appropriate.

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