

How do you retrofit a house in a conservation one if with listing protection?

On the conservation and listed building question, the balance between improving the energy efficiency of our houses and that of protecting our heritage is a complex one, with Historic England as the statutory consultee for listed buildings, and conservation officers reporting to the local planning authority. Which themselves are bound by the Local Plan. It may be the *Planning for the Future* may change the priorities. The question is whether the present imbalance in favour of heritage requires new legislation or a change of approach by Historic England and planning officers.

David Dixon, Bridport Town Council's climate emergency adviser, put together the following for the town council and I cannot do better than forwarding his advice:

Designated heritage assets are protected by law under Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 underpinned by Government policy: National Planning Policy Framework, Section 12: 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'.. Government policy is the emphasis on the presumption in favour of the preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and the avoidance of any detrimental and negative impact or harm that would be counter to these aims..

NPPF 196. Is the critical guidance "*Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use*".

It is the definition and interpretation of Harm that is key to what changes might be approved or might be resisted by an individual Conservation Officer. Most LPAs push the line that before installation of renewables are considered, steps should be taken to cut energy consumption. Taking a whole building approach is a logical process which enables the best possible balance to be struck between saving energy and reducing carbon emissions, sustaining heritage significance, and maintaining a healthy building.

A good place to start exploring this subject is STBA responsible retro fit of traditional buildings:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/planning-responsible-retrofit-of-traditional-buildings/responsible-retrofit-trad-bldgs/>

Historic England has a wide variety of guidance on improving energy efficiency in historic buildings:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/energy-efficiency-and-historic-buildings/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/eehb-draught-proofing-windows-doors/>

As well as guidance on Installing Renewables:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/eehb-solar-electric/heag173-eehb-solar-electric-photovoltaics/>

The approach in cities like Bath should be used to encourage planners/
Conservation officers in other places:

https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-01/listed_building_guidance_-_energy_0.pdf

and

https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-01/Sustainable%20Construction%20%20and%20Retrofitting_adoption_draft_spd.pdf

It is clear that the balancing of the varying and competing priorities and interests is a complex process and can be difficult to reconcile, but change is broadly acknowledged in principle by the legislation protecting the historic environment. National policy guidance has an emphasis on careful, sensitive informed management of change. What perhaps we should encourage is good practice by Historic Building Officers rather than any re wording of policy.