

# Conservation Projects – All You Need To Know

**At FENSA we get asked about all manner of topics and one that pops up regularly is around conservation areas and listed buildings, writes technical manager Sam Davies.**

There are lots of rumours that lead to incorrect assumptions. Let's help clarify all you need to know about requirements for replacing windows in conservation areas and listed buildings.

## **What is a conservation area?**

Conservation areas exist to manage and protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place – in other words, the features that make it unique. Every local authority in England has at least one conservation area and there are around 10,000 in England.

## **Replacing windows/doors**

Living in or working on a property in a conservation area might mean that the house is affected by special controls – which are called 'Article 4 Directions'. These restrict work you can normally do without planning permission such as replacing external doors or windows.

These controls are tailored to each area by the council and are put in place when there are particular elements of local buildings they want to protect.

The homeowner should be aware of the restrictions or allowances placed within the Article 4 directive and in many cases will have to have planning permission granted. It is imperative that the installer checks these

measures prior to agreeing a contract to undertake the replacement of windows and doors.

Where an Article 4 directive is not in place, planning permission must be granted prior to any work taking place.

## **Are there automatic building regulation exemptions in conservation areas?**

There are absolutely no exemptions to building regulations in conservation areas. However, under the advice of the planning authority, it may be determined that particular features of a modern window are not desired due to a detriment in characteristic design (the features that make it unique). For example, the planning authority may decide that trickle vents should not be incorporated.

It is important to say that this is not an exemption. Background ventilation must still be provided to the property but in an alternative form to trickle vents, such as through wall or mechanical ventilation.

## **Can I register installations in conservation areas with FENSA?**

Yes, you should register these with FENSA. You may be asked for proof of the planning decision should any specific instructions be in place, eg no trickle vents.

## **How do listed buildings differ?**

It is important to note that listed buildings cannot be registered with FENSA. These must be notified directly with the local



authority building control. Controls and protections are stricter with listed buildings and planning permission is required.

## **Are there building regulation exemptions in listed buildings?**

Exemptions are extremely rare. The most common exemption is overall thermal efficiency. Due to design restrictions, in exceptional circumstances it can be found that a replacement window/door cannot meet the regulatory requirement set out in Approved Document L, in which case a central pane\* U-value of 1.2 W/m<sup>2</sup>K would be permissible due to the need to protect the characteristic of the building. (\*central pane = the thermal performance of the glass units alone.)

In addition, the planning authority has the ability to exempt an installation from compliance requirements of certain approved documents. The planning authority is the only department that can grant this permission. [i](#)

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