

WINDOWS AND PLANNING ISSUES

If a church wishes to change the windows of its chapel or hall, it is necessary to obtain two separate and distinct approvals: “Planning” and “Building Regulations”.

Obviously planning matters are not the only issues that need to be considered when replacing windows. Thermal heat loss, safety glazing, ventilation and fire safety should also be taken into account and a building professional will be able to advise churches as required.

Planning Approval

If you are replacing a window exactly like for like (i.e. wood for wood, metal for metal) and to the same profile and appearance and number of panes of glass, no planning approval is necessary. However, if you are replacing wood with metal or UPVC or enlarging the frame to accommodate the double glazing units, or changing the number or sizes of panes or altering the appearance in any other way, you will need planning approval.

The application would need to be submitted to the Local Planning Office with a photograph or drawing of the existing and a manufacturers’/installers’ picture of the proposal. (Note: this does not apply to replacing broken glass, single or double glazed, within a window, or replacing an isolated rotten part of the framing, only total replacement is affected).

Conservation Area

If you are in a Conservation Area (CA) there are further issues to address. The need to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA will be a material consideration in the planning decision. Early consultation with the Conservation Officer is always advisable when the building is in a CA, even when replacing windows like for like.

Listed Building

If you have a listed building, an additional application for listed building consent must be submitted at the same time as your planning application. There is no additional fee, but again the examination of the details and materials will be more rigorous and you must expect the quality of the replacement to be above standard.

It is worthwhile to note, however, that some groups of churches are subject to ‘Ecclesiastical Exemption’ (e.g. The Baptist Union of England and Wales), and therefore do not require Listed Building Consent. For further information see: <https://historicengland.org.uk> and search under ‘Ecclesiastical Exemption’

Building Regulations

Building Regulations approval is obtained from the local Building Control Department (often housed in the same building as your local planner, but having no functioning overlap). Any replacement window has to meet Part L and Part N of the newly revised Building Regulations requirements. Part L deals with thermal insulation and Part N deals with glazing and safety. Any replacement window has to meet these new requirements of improved thermal capacity and quality of glazing.

Registered Installer

One way of ensuring this acceptability to your local Building Control Department is to employ a registered installer who will include in his price an allowance for confirming to the local Building Control Department that the new windows conform.

The installer has to be registered with the British Glass Federation and should be registered with a Competent Person Scheme (e.g. BSI, CERTASS or FENSA - see below for more details). When work is completed they will produce a certificate showing that the work was carried out by a registered installer.

If you chose not to employ a registered installer, your local builder or a church officer will need to visit the Building Control Department and obtain approval in that way. Obviously if you employ someone else to obtain this approval there will be a modest cost.

For information on Competent Person Schemes with BSI, CERTASS or FENSA visit or call:

www.bsigroup.com (020 8996 9000)

www.certass.co.uk (01292 292 095 or 0845 094 8025)

www.fensa.co.uk (020 7645 3700)

In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework is a useful reference guide that places the considerations outlined in this Fact Sheet in a broader national context:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

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