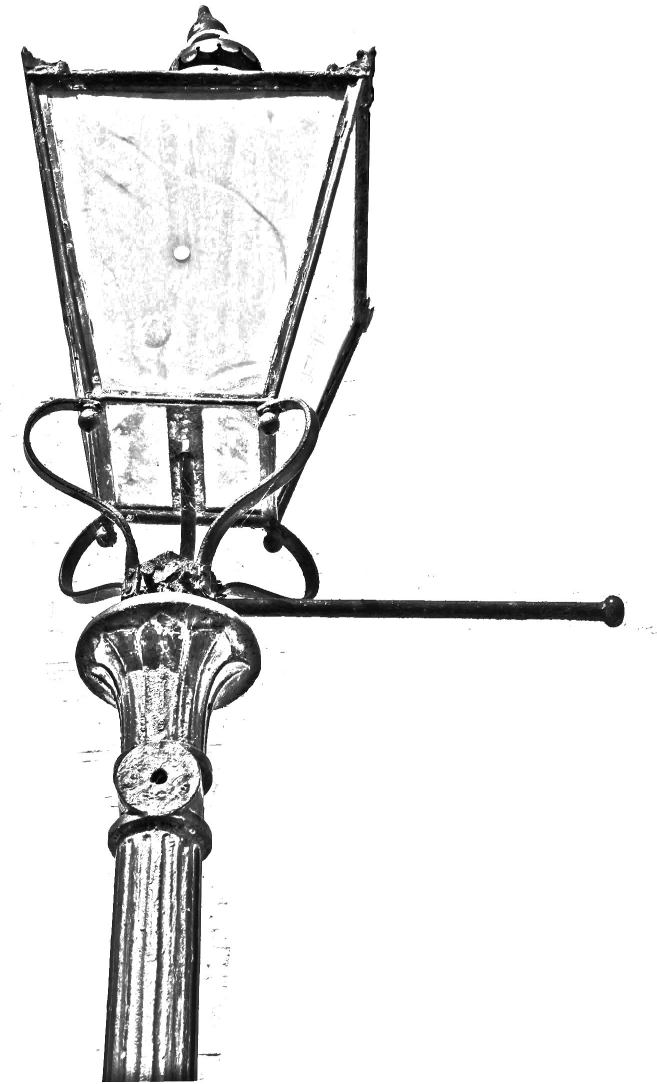


South Benfleet Conservation Area Design Code



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1.Introduction

1.1. Scope of the Design Code

This document is for building owners, developers and decision-makers with an interest in the South Benfleet Conservation Area to help with the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the area, and to ensure its special architectural and historic interest is conserved. Where planning applications are submitted for changes to buildings, the redevelopment of sites and new developments within the Conservation Area, they must adhere to the principles set out within this document.

The objective of this Design Code is to conserve the Conservation Area's architectural and historic interest and to improve the built environment for residents and visitors to the area.

Surviving architectural features of interest within individual buildings, whether original or historically appropriate, are important elements of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The Council will seek to retain these features, will support efforts to reinstate lost features and welcome proposals that better reveal or enhance the significance of the Conservation Area. Proposals which have the potential to adversely affect the character or appearance of the Conservation Area will not be supported. The Council will achieve these aims through the planning process and by removing, where necessary, permitted development rights (as per the Article 4 Direction). This gives the Council a level of control over changes within the Conservation Area.

1.2. Baseline Assessment

The baseline of the Design Code is provided by the South Benfleet Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (2024), which provides an understanding and assessment of the Conservation Area's significance, including its historic development and the contribution made by its buildings and open spaces. The local building types, architectural styles, materials, detailing and landscaping all contribute to the character and appearance of South Benfleet Conservation Area, and form the basis for this Design Code.

1.3.How to use this code

The code is divided into different design themes, in accordance with the National Model Design Code (NMDC), with design parameters set out within.

There are three levels of instruction to follow:

MUST

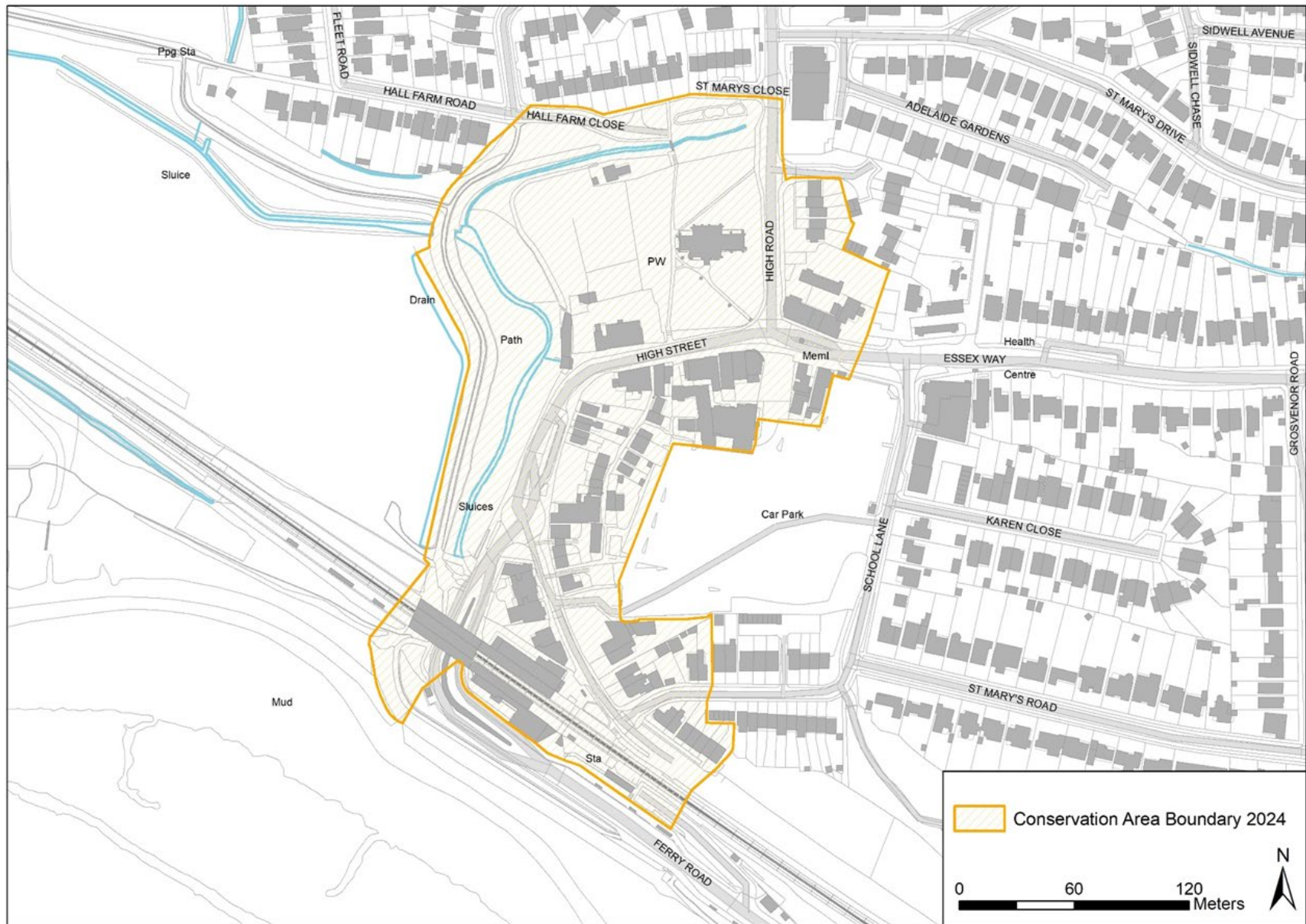
Mandatory practices and considerations

SHOULD

Practices and considerations which should be adhered to

CAN

Practices which can be considered



2. Design Code

2.1. Infill developments and the redevelopment of opportunity sites

South Benfleet Conservation Area has a very limited number of opportunity sites for infill development. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (paragraph 219), the Council should look for new developments on these sites to enhance or better reveal the significance of the Conservation Area. The National Model Design Code Guidance Notes¹ states,

‘Well-designed development adds a new layer to the history of a site while enhancing and respecting its past, with the expectation that new development will be valued for its heritage in the future as heritage assets are today.’

In this regard, an understanding of the context, history and character of an area must influence the siting and design of new development. Any new development within the Conservation Area should adhere to the following guidance.

The Conservation Area Character Appraisal has identified three buildings (Section 7.2) within the Conservation Area which are considered to make a negative contribution to the significance of the area, and which could be altered or redeveloped to make a positive contribution.

¹ National Model Design Code Part 2 Guidance Notes, 2021, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Development Type

Residential and mixed commercial developments are appropriate within South Benfleet Conservation Area. Both the opportunity sites identified in the Section 7.2 of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2024) would benefit from high quality developments.

SHOULD

Redevelopment schemes should retain the existing residential or commercial character of the sites.

Building positioning and orientation

Building lines are generally consistent. Buildings are predominantly positioned at the back of the pavement with their principal elevations fronting onto the street. Therefore, it is important that any new development maintains this relationship with the street and follows the established building line.

MUST

New developments must follow the existing building line and align with the streets.

Building form and scale

MUST

Any new development must reflect the prevailing building height of the area, particularly the scale of the adjacent properties.

CAN

Generally, two-storey buildings with traditional roof forms would respect the prevailing character of the area.

MUST

New developments must respect the narrow historic plot sizes to ensure the grain of the area is preserved.

Elevational treatment and detailing

Historic buildings within the Conservation Area largely have a regular bay rhythm with apertures of vertical (sash window) or horizontal (casement window) proportions.

SHOULD

The articulation in the principal elevations, such as the bay rhythm and the positioning and scale of openings, should reflect the prevailing historic built form.

SHOULD

The ratio of wall to window is an important consideration, with historic buildings having a well-proportioned balance between walls and windows, which should be continued in new development.

Materials

SHOULD

The prevailing traditional material palette of the Conservation Area should be reflected in any new development.

Traditional and handmade materials of a high quality contribute to the area's character and appearance by providing natural variations in texture and colour.

SHOULD

Plain red clay tiles and natural slates should be used for roofs, with timber bargeboards and fascias or open tiled verges.

SHOULD

The predominant elevation materials of buildings within the Conservation Area are soft red brick, yellow stock brick, pale-coloured render or timber featheredged weatherboarding, and these should be reflected in any new development.

Both sash and casement windows are features of the Conservation Area.

SHOULD

New development should reflect the quality and craftsmanship of traditional timber windows and doors.

CAN

The detailing of surviving historic windows can be replicated including integral glazing bars.

MUST

Windows frames must have concealed or no trickle vents.

MUST

Casement windows must have flush fitting frames.

Landscaping and boundary treatments

Front gardens and areas of landscaping contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area. Whilst there are examples, particularly commercial properties, of buildings positioned at the back of pavement, it could be appropriate for new residential development to incorporate small front gardens with front boundary treatments of low brick walls. Timber picket fences may also be appropriate.

CAN

New residential developments can incorporate front gardens reflecting the prevailing context.

CAN

Low brick walls and timber picket fences can be used for front boundary treatments.

2.2. Alterations and extensions to existing buildings

Roof alterations (dormers, rooflights, chimneys)

South Benfleet Conservation Area generally features traditional roofscapes free from unsympathetic modern interventions like box dormers and rooflights.

MUST

Traditional roof forms and coverings (clay tile and natural slate, for example) must be preserved/retained.

Alterations to the roof form, for example, the conversion from a hipped to a gabled roof, removal of chimney stacks or increases in ridge height to provide for loft conversions would not be supported.

MUST

Existing roofs must not be altered with large dormers, box dormers and rooflights visible from the public realm.

To preserve the character and appearance of the area, large dormers, box dormers and prominently positioned rooflights on front elevations would not be supported.

SHOULD

Where opportunities arise, concrete tiles on historic buildings should be replaced with more traditional materials including plain clay tiles or natural slates, to better reflect the historic roofscape of the area.

Property owners are generally encouraged to repair and maintain roofs in good order.

SHOULD

Broken, damaged or loose tiles and blocked guttering and other rainwater goods should be a priority for repair and maintenance.

Chimney stacks are an important element of the traditional roofscapes within the Conservation Area. Removal of chimney stacks or reductions in height would not be supported. Traditional clay chimney pots and lead flashing should also be maintained.

MUST

Historic chimney stacks must be retained.

Walls (painting, rendering, cladding)

SHOULD

The external walls of buildings should be well maintained and finished with render, brick or clad in high quality featheredged timber weatherboard.

MUST

Where there is existing exposed brickwork, this must not be covered with render or weatherboarding.

MUST

Where buildings are constructed in soft red bricks or are of traditional construction, repointing must be in an appropriate lime mortar and with a pointing profile to match the original finish (usually a flush profile).

SHOULD

In most cases it is appropriate for new extensions to match the material of the host building. Where new brick walls are being constructed, they should match the colour, texture, brick bond, detailing and pointing profile of the original brickwork.

Windows and doors

Historically all buildings within the Conservation Area had single-glazed timber windows. Many historic windows across the Conservation Area have been replaced with uPVC double-glazed units due to the desire to improve energy efficiency and reduce cyclical maintenance. Unfortunately, these are of a poor material quality and usually have significantly thicker frames and surface mounted glazing bars, poorly imitating the profiles of traditional windows. uPVC windows also fail to exhibit the craftsmanship of traditional timber windows and do not have the same material

authenticity which contributes to the architectural interest of individual buildings and the Conservation Area as a whole.

SHOULD

Existing traditional timber-framed windows and doors should be maintained and repaired wherever possible.

MUST

Proposals to replace historic or traditional windows must be supported by a condition survey from a suitably qualified and experienced surveyor.

MUST

Where justified, the replacement of historic or traditional windows must be timber and designed on a like-for-like basis.

SHOULD

Unsympathetic uPVC windows should be replaced with timber windows of a traditional design, to complement the character and appearance of the property and the local area.

CAN

If well-detailed, slim double-glazing can be incorporated into new and existing timber windows.

MUST

Top hung and tilt and turn windows must not be used.

Further detail on the repair and replacement of traditional windows can be found in the Historic England guidance [Traditional Windows: Their Care, Repair and Upgrading](#) (2017).

Architectural details

MUST

Surviving architectural details such as decorative brickwork, string courses, eaves details, cornices and bargeboards etc. must be conserved, maintained and repaired on a like-for-like basis.

CAN

Where new extensions are proposed, some of the architectural details of the host building can be replicated.

Porches

Porches are not a characteristic feature of South Benfleet Conservation Area.

MUST

Porches should not be introduced on historic buildings if they obscure architectural details including decorative door surrounds or brick details.

SHOULD

However, if a porch were considered to be an acceptable addition it should be modest in scale, constructed in traditional materials to harmonise with the host building and should have a traditional pitched or lean-to roof.

Extensions (form and scale, elevational treatment)

SHOULD

Extensions should always be sympathetic to the scale, form and materials of the host building to ensure they harmonise with their surroundings.

MUST

Extensions should be subservient in scale and appearance.

Subservience is often best achieved by ensuring the dimensions do not compete with the host dwelling. This could entail ensuring the height of a two-storey extension is lower than the existing two storey building, or ensuring a single storey extension does not span the entire width of a rear elevation.

SHOULD

The overall form and proportions of any extensions should remain traditional to avoid competing architectural styles.

CAN

There may be opportunities for introducing some elements of contemporary design and detailing.

Sustainability

Climate change and renewable energy are growing considerations around change in the built environment. Some forms of renewable energy are less compatible with conservation areas if they are unsympathetically designed or positioned in prominent locations.

The roofscapes within the South Benfleet Conservation Area remain free from solar panels.

MUST

Solar panels must not be installed on the front facing roof slopes and should be positioned on rear roof slopes or in roof valleys, or on the roofs of rear outbuildings.

CAN

Ground-mounted solar panels in rear gardens also have less visual impact.

SHOULD	Other renewable energy sources, such as air source heat pumps, should be positioned to the rear of buildings.
SHOULD	When retrofitting buildings within the Conservation Area, a holistic 'whole building' approach should be adopted to consider all of the aspects of the building fabric.
SHOULD	Buildings should be maintained to a high standard, including repairing timber windows to ensure they are not causing draughts.
CAN	Internal insulation will not impact the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, but consideration should be given to the compatibility of insulation with historic buildings; any insulation should be vapour permeable.
MUST	External insulation must not be used on historic brick buildings and may not be appropriate for historic rendered or weatherboarded buildings due to the alterations needed to openings and eaves detailing.
CAN	Secondary glazing allows historic and traditional windows to be preserved whilst improving energy efficiency.
MUST	uPVC double-glazing is not a sympathetic and must not be installed.

Historic England have produced a suite of guidance documents regarding energy efficiency and historic buildings, and these should be consulted where relevant:

- Historic England Advice Note 18: *Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency (2024)*
- Historic England, *Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading (2017)*

Further guidance on climate change and energy efficiency in relation to the historic environment are available on the Essex Design Guide website at this [link](#).

Front Gardens and Boundary treatments

SHOULD	Existing front gardens and boundary walls should be retained. Removal of front gardens and boundary walls to provide for off-street car parking will be resisted.
CAN	Lost front gardens and front boundary walls can be reinstated and this is encouraged.
CAN	Low brick walls and timber picket fences can be used for front boundary treatments.
SHOULD	Close boarded fences with concrete posts do not complement the character of the Conservation Area and should be avoided.

2.3.Shopfronts and signage

General principles

Shop fronts are not commonplace within the Conservation Area, but where they are present, they have a prominent place within the streetscene. There are a variety of designs, with few examples of historic shopfronts surviving.

SHOULD

Well-designed traditional shopfronts should be preserved and maintained.

SHOULD

Incongruous shopfronts and associated signs should be replaced.

Replacement of incongruous shopfronts provides an important opportunity to revitalise and enhance the streetscene. The replacement of full height windows and a rationalisation of signage in particular could have a quick and notable effect on a streetscene, improving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

SHOULD

When designing replacement shopfronts, the characteristics of the host building as well as the streetscene should be taken into consideration.

SHOULD

All windows, doors and fascias should be proportionate to the host building.

CAN

The installation of traditional architectural features such as stallrisers, cornices, consoles and decorative tiling can be considered as part of any replacement shopfront.

Features of traditional shopfront are illustrated below (Figure 1). However, all of these features may not be appropriate on all buildings.



Figure 1: Elements of a traditional shopfront.

SHOULD

Signage and fascia boards are often the most prominent part of any shopfront, therefore great care should be taken with their design. The colour, font, size and appearance of all branding can have a positive or negative effect and should therefore be well considered.

- MUST** Overly large or dominant signage must not be used.
- MUST** Fascia signs must not go above ground floor level.
- MUST** The fascia must not include enlarged or cramped typefaces.
- CAN** The use of individual cast metal lettering or painted traditional sign writing is encouraged.
- MUST** Businesses must not install excessive advertisement displays and paraphernalia in the facade.

Hanging signs are traditional and can provide additional opportunities for advertising and wayfinding.

- SHOULD** The position and scale of hanging signs should be carefully considered.
- MUST** Internally illuminated signage must not be used within the Conservation Area.
- CAN** The use of downward pointing trough lights to illuminate fascia boards may be acceptable, however lighting should be kept to a minimum.

2.4. Public open spaces and street furniture

Public open spaces and street furniture are important elements of the Conservation Area's overall character and appearance.

- SHOULD** A consistent and holistic approach should be used for all changes to street furniture, including the installation of new items.
- SHOULD** Over proliferation of street furniture, which can lead to visual clutter, should be avoided.
- SHOULD** The use of traditional materials and designs should be considered for all new and replacement items, as this would reflect the character of the building stock and enhance the overall appearance of the area.
- SHOULD** New or replacement paving, furniture and other elements of the streetscape should be chosen to enhance the quality of the environment and complement surrounding buildings.
- MUST** Excavation of paving for service-related works must be made good and the infilling must match the surface material and colour.
- MUST** Different materials and sizes of kerb stones must not be used when repairing the pavements.
- SHOULD** Street lighting should be consistent in design, height, materiality and colour.
- SHOULD** Cast iron columns with traditional lamp units should be used for street lighting. Utilitarian steel or concrete lampposts should not be used.

SHOULD

New EV charging equipment should be integrated into existing street furniture, i.e. lampposts and bollards.

SHOULD

Litter bins should be cast iron or steel, not plastic.

CAN

Benches can be installed along key walking routes and public open spaces along the creek.

SHOULD

Benches should be cast iron, stone, or hardwood timber, or a combination (for example cast iron supports with timber seat and back).

SHOULD

Utilitarian types of metal, such as stainless or galvanized steel should not be used.

3. Additional resources

3.1. Historic England guidance

Additional guidance to help owners of historic houses in making decisions about the maintenance, repair and alteration of their homes is provided in the advice section of Historic England's website. The page entitled 'Your Home' provides links to guidance regarding making changes to historic homes, including what permission might be required to make changes to historic homes, and general principles and advice on the most common types of alterations. Other pages in this section include one entitled 'Owning an Older Home', which provides access to guidance on living in a conservation area, and 'Looking After Your Home', which contains links to advice on maintenance and repair.

Further guidance is provided in the following Advice Notes.

- [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Draught-proofing windows and doors](#)
- [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Early cavity walls](#)
- [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: How to Improve Energy Efficiency](#)
- [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating flat roofs](#)
- [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating pitched roofs at ceiling level - cold roofs](#)
- [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating pitched roofs at rafter level-warm roofs](#)
- [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating solid ground floors](#)
- [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating solid walls](#)
- [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulation of suspended timber floors](#)
- [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Open fires, chimneys and flues](#)
- [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Secondary glazing for windows](#)
- [Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency HEAN 18](#)
- [Guide for Owners of Listed Buildings](#)
- [Heat Pumps in Historic Buildings \(Air Source Heat Pump Case Studies – Small-scale Buildings\)](#)
- [Listed Building Consent: Historic England Advice Note 16](#)
- [Making Changes to Heritage Assets: Historic England Advice Note 2](#)
- [Repointing Brick and Stone Walls](#)

- Statements of Heritage Significance: Historic England Advice Note 12
- Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading