
REPORT TO:	Heritage Grants Sub Committee	AGENDA ITEM: 7
DATE OF MEETING:	25th June 2009	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Director of Community Services	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Marilyn Hallard, Design and Conservation Officer, x5747	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Historic Building and Conservation Area Grants: Joinery Conditions	REF: See individual items
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE: DS3

1.0 Recommendations

HISTORIC BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREA GRANTS

- 1.1 That, where grant assistance is being offered for joinery restoration, applicants be required to ensure that estimates (and specifications) set out the timber species and where appropriate, method of treatment and that the following condition to added to such grant offers:

‘The joinery shall be pre treated by an agreed method and shall be painted with an agreed paint system, coating all surfaces, before fixing.’

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To consider standard grant requirements regarding timber treatment for joinery replacement being grant aided under the Historic Building and Conservation Area grant scheme.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The aim of the grant scheme is to encourage and promote the appropriate repair and authentic restoration of damaged historic buildings, priority having been given to the latter for a number of years. A large number of the applications that come before the committee therefore are for replacement doors and windows.
- 3.2 The grant guidance notes and standard conditions require all work to be carried out to the satisfaction of the Council and for access to the works to be given to officers to make inspections during progress and on completion. There are no specific technical standards set out but there is a general requirement for good quality long-term repairs, which are appropriate to the historic character of the buildings concerned using natural materials, traditional repair techniques and traditional local styles. Also where missing architectural details are to be reinstated these must be an accurate copy of the original based on old photographs or other documentary or archaeological evidence wherever possible. Where this is not possible the pattern used must be appropriate for the building.

3.3 In addition to these general requirements, if it is considered necessary, further detailed specific conditions are set out in the committee reports and attached to grant offers. For instance these often require the precise details of new joinery, colour schemes and external ironmongery to be agreed. But there is usually no general or specific requirement relating to timber type or treatment method. It has been customary to rely on the choices of the companies who specialise in this type of bespoke joinery who are operating in the top sector of the market and choose their timbers with both durability and competitiveness in mind.

3.4 It is clearly important to use good quality timber. The 'industry' choice for bespoke joinery, which is to be painted is unsorted redwood which with a treatment and proper maintenance is regarded as suitably durable. Other good choices are Douglas Fir (the densest softwood available today) and hardwood, both of which are more durable than unsorted redwood and significantly more expensive. Hardwood is often chosen where an unpainted or stained finish is desired and many hardwoods will not take a paint making them unsuitable for historic building work. However there are some that can be painted and these can and have been grant aided. Because of their natural durability hardwoods don't need to be treated, indeed most are not porous enough for the treatment to penetrate the wood. The choice of softwood or hardwood is usually left to the applicant. The choice of softwoods is usually left to the joiner but applicants are encouraged to use joiners with a good track record in historic building work.

3.5 For all PSiCA jointly funded schemes English Heritage set out standards across the range of grant eligible repairs. Their guidance on standards of work for joinery is worded so as not to be prescriptive, allowing for a range of differing approaches by architects and tradesmen, as follows:

'Existing windows and/or external doors should be retained and repaired wherever possible; it is important to retain and repair surviving early casements and glass. The quality of early twentieth century timber, glass and fittings and those of earlier date should be respected. If replacement is unavoidable, the new windows should be accurate replicas to the original design, in terms of construction, arrangement of panes and detail. Timber sections, especially mouldings, should be to the original **size** and profile; this is of particular importance for glazing bars and meeting rails to horizontal sashes. Double-hung sliding sashes should be without horns (unless the original sashes were to this pattern) and should be hung on cords with weights. Spring balances for sashes are not acceptable. The quality of the timber for repairs should be stated e.g. for high quality softwood repair, the heartwood of a stated timber species and vacuum pressure impregnated may be appropriate.

Existing old, especially crown, glass should always be protected from damage, retained and re-used in new windows, as replacement with modern float glass will always adversely affect the appearance. New door and window furniture should be to the original pattern. New and/or repaired external joinery should be painted with an appropriate exterior joinery paint and not stained.'

3.6 Fast grown modern softwoods are generally inferior to historic softwoods, which were denser. Treatment of modern timber to improve durability is common practice. This can be done in a number of ways including brush applied, dipped and by pressure impregnation. Until recent years most treatment systems were chemical but for health and safety reasons are now water based.

3.7 Pressure treatment works by removing moisture from the timber and then flooding it with the treatment in controlled conditions. This allows penetration further into the

timber than other systems and is a relatively simple process. However it is not without its drawbacks. It is 'factory' based remote from the joiners workshop and the water based compounds have a tendency to make the timber swell and warp. To be effective the window components need to be machined, treated in kit form, so that all the cut ends are adequately treated, and then assembled back at the joinery workshop. It may then be necessary for treated components to be reworked, often machining off the treated end grain. The extra costs associated with this process are not only the cost of the treatment itself but also the packaging and transport to the works along with any waste or reworking that proves necessary.

- 3.8 Despite the drawbacks pressure treatment is standard practice for the bulk production of many large companies to boost the durability of softwoods (whether or not well chosen for natural durability). With mass production it is reasonably easy to allow for wastage.
- 3.9 For bespoke joinery the cost of pressure treatment can be disproportionately large. Most of the small high quality joiners working on historic buildings in the area do not use pressure treatment as a result. They do however recognise the benefit of treatment and prefer to brush treat or dip in their own workshops thus avoiding the identified drawbacks of the pressure treatment.
- 3.10 It is difficult to quantify the added durability conferred by factory or workshop treatments. Traditional joinery is painted and the paint and maintenance regime will significantly affect durability. Some paint systems such as linseed oil based coating work by penetrating into the timber and this is inhibited by any treatment system and so its use is advised against with this system. Micro porous paint systems allow timber to breathe and dry out through the paint film. Whilst these systems are compatible with pre-treatment they in themselves improve the durability of timber and can help prevent swelling if applied to all surfaces before the window is fitted and re-coated as necessary following fitting.
- 3.11 The best soft wood available is Douglas Fir and this is usually specified by the National Trust. Their surveyors do not specify pressure treatment for the same reasons that most small joiners specialising in bespoke joinery avoid it opting instead for a proprietary brush applied treatment and coating with a micro porous paint system before fixing.
- 3.12 It is clear that the best durability is obtained from using the highest quality timber with or without treatment. However to require the use of Douglas Fir or hardwood would significantly increase applicants costs and remove choice. The bespoke joinery industry choice is considered to be good quality and that represents good value for the Council in offering grant assistance.
- 3.13 It is considered that it would be desirable to offer applicants a guidance note on timber and treatment choice and require as a condition of grant aid that timber species and treatment methods to be specified in the quotes so that this can be vetted more closely as part of the grant process.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 It is important to ensure that good quality work in order to protect the Council's investment through grants. However if grant conditions are too onerous this will

decrease the ability to persuade owners to enhance the appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas through authentic restoration.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 None

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 Historic building grants contribute towards sustaining the District's built heritage, a valuable and non-renewable resource investment in which promotes tourism and improves environmental quality for all.

7.0 Background Papers

7.1 Historic Building and Conservation Area Grant guidance notes. Ref: http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/conservation_and_heritage/conservation_grants/default.asp

7.2 English Heritage PSiCA scheme guidance notes. File Ref: Swadlincote PSiCA general.