

An 'open and shut' case for windows

An important message to all
Letchworth Garden City homeowners



Under the terms of their lease or the 'Scheme of Management' if the property is freehold, the vast majority of homeowners in Letchworth Garden City are required to seek the approval of the Foundation to alterations which are material to the external appearance of the property. The Foundation can enforce this requirement through exercising legal powers. This is designed to protect the appearance of the Garden City environment.

The appearance of windows and doors is fundamental to the street scene.

Over a long period, residents have been replacing their original windows, sometimes with the Foundation's consent, but often without. The lack of consent for such changes, particularly when the new windows are different from the originals, is creating a problem for residents when selling their homes because of the legal impediment. The Foundation is proposing to address the problem and help protect the unique Garden City environment by encouraging those householders affected, to revert back to the original windows in the longer term, while removing the immediate problem on sales.

Therefore, from October 1, 2005, a 'Moratorium' for windows replaced prior to that date, without an application to the Foundation for consent, will apply and a 50% grant towards new windows will form part of the package.

What do we mean by 'a Moratorium'?

Homeowners will be required to make an initial application to the Foundation to qualify for the 'moratorium.' The Foundation will then issue a 'Moratorium' Notice, if appropriate, to the effect that;

- *For current windows that do not comply with the Design Guidance, both inside and outside the Conservation Area, the Foundation will not take action either now or in the future on the windows in question, provided that when and if the windows may be replaced, consent will be sought and that the new windows installed will match the original design.*

When the Moratorium Notice is issued, property owners will also be given the option to change the windows within three years from the date of the Moratorium Notice and claim a 50 per cent grant from the Foundation towards the cost, with an upper limit for each property of £6,000 for wooden and £4,000 for PVCu windows. This will be a special 'one-off' offer for those successfully applying for a 'Moratorium' Notice by 31st March 2006.

Those who do not apply in that timescale will still be able to claim a Moratorium Notice, but may need to prove that their replacement windows were installed prior to 1st October 2005. They would not benefit from the increased grant level but would, of course, be eligible for the normal Heritage Foundation grant.

We are here to help with your questions concerning this positive and new approach to replacement windows in the Garden City.

Please work with us to protect the town for all its future generations

Thank you





Is there a fee or application form?

An application form is attached but no fee is required.

The property owner, as registered with us, must make the application. For both leasehold and freehold properties there is an obligation in the lease or Scheme of Management to register changes of ownership with the Foundation. Your solicitor normally does this when you take over the ownership. This is a separate requirement from informing the Land Registry.

What information should I send with an application for a Moratorium Notice?

The application should contain full details and a description of the windows including photographs. It would be helpful if you could confirm when the works were carried out.

What happens after I've sent in a request?

We will send you an acknowledgement letter, within a few days, letting you know who will be dealing with your request. This letter will also tell you if we need any more information. We will also let you know if your windows already have our consent since you will then not need to apply for a Moratorium Notice.

How long will it take to receive a notice?

The length of time taken to deal with a request varies from two to several weeks. Applications can be dealt with quicker if they contain all the necessary information. At the end of the process, we will send the registered owner details of the Heritage Grants and either:-

a notice giving approval for the windows;

OR

a Moratorium Notice. This will confirm that the Foundation will not take legal action, either now or in the future, provided that when the windows are replaced they match the original design (A copy of the original plans will be attached to the Moratorium Notice, if available)

Why is the Foundation so concerned about windows?

As custodian of the Garden City Estate, the Foundation has become increasingly concerned about the adverse effect that poorly designed or inappropriate windows are having on the visual environment of the World's First Garden City.

Why do I need consent from the Foundation in the first place?

To protect the original concepts of the town's founder, Ebenezer Howard, many properties in Letchworth Garden City, both Leasehold and Freehold, contain management conditions or covenants in their deeds. These require the consent of the Foundation for alterations materially affecting the appearance of the property. The obligations, which are contained in your lease or, if you own the freehold, in the 'Scheme of Management', cover a number of other areas, including restrictions on the cutting of trees and hedges and running a business from home.

Why do we still have these obligations today?

These obligations are just as important today as investment in property increases and many people are changing the external appearance of their homes. The aims of the Scheme of Management and the leasehold obligations are to keep the Estate in good condition, protect its environment and maintain its value. As a homeowner they help to ensure that your neighbours respect the value and appearance of the area in which you live. For example, research shows that 'house buyers are willing to pay a premium to live in picturesque surroundings'. This can increase the value of a home by, in some cases, up to 32%¹.

¹Halifax Estate Agencies – March 2005



How do I find out if my windows have consent?

Normally, when you bought your home, your solicitor will have checked that all alterations have received the necessary approvals. If your solicitor cannot help, please let us know. If your windows do have consent from the Foundation, there is no need for you to apply for a Notice.



Does the Foundation's decision to suspend action on windows include North Hertfordshire District Councils permission?

North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) deals with planning permission and consent under the Building Regulations. It has statutory powers and is guided by national policies; therefore, the need for consent from NHDC cannot be relaxed by the Foundation.

Why should I apply for my windows under the Moratorium?

When you sell your house, often the purchasers solicitor and mortgage lender will ask for proof that any changes to your home have the necessary consents from both the Foundation and NHDC. Failure to provide this could result in the sale either being delayed or falling through completely.

Secondly, any homeowner wishing to change their windows will be able to claim a grant from the Foundation to assist with the cost of replacing the windows in the original style. Until the 31st March 2006, where the Heritage Foundation issues a Moratorium Notice, it will cover up to 50% of the cost of the replacements, with an upper limit of £6,000 for timber and £4,000 for PVCu, provided the works take place within three years from the date of the Notice. After 31st March 2006, and in other cases, the normal Heritage Grant amounts, prevalent at the time of application, will apply.

I'm thinking about moving so can I pass my 50% grant under the Moratorium Notice to a future buyer?

The ability to claim a 50% grant towards the cost of replacement windows is only available to the original applicant.

Will the Foundation suspend taking action over other unauthorised works?

There are no plans to extend the moratorium to other types of work to houses in the town. Residents may wish to check with the Estate Management Unit and NHDC before commencing any works to ensure that all the necessary consents are obtained.





What if my windows were installed whilst an application for consent was being considered, which was subsequently refused, or after a refusal?

This initiative will not, then, be available to you.

Are there any important dates for me to consider?

An application for a Moratorium Notice can be made at any time for windows installed prior to 1st October 2005.

To be eligible for a 50% grant, a successful application for a Moratorium Notice must be made before 31st March 2006.

On receipt of a Moratorium Notice, the applicant has 3 years from the date of the Notice to apply for the 50% grant and complete the replacement of the windows.

What is the Design Guidance?

The Foundation has Design Guidance to help homeowners who wish to carry out works in Letchworth Garden City. This outlines the criteria used for granting consent. However, it is a guideline document only, whose aim is to assist in achieving consistency across the town. There are a wide range of properties and styles, from early Garden City Cottages to modern homes on the newer estates, and we recognize that every home is unique.

Is there any more information available and where can I get a copy of the Design Guidance?

As well as our booklet 'Design Guidance for Residential Areas in Letchworth Garden City', we have guides on a number of individual aspects such as replacing windows and doors, trees and hedges, running a business from home, Heritage Grants, hard standings and the Advisory Management Committee. Please telephone us; we can send you the guidance and let you know about the latest information. Alternatively, further information can be found on our website – www.lgchf.com

I'm thinking about replacing my windows anyway so would there be any help with the cost?

Yes, the Foundation can assist with the cost of restoring the windows (plus doors and other features) in your house to the original style. Heritage Grants are available for all homeowners and, in some cases, the Foundation can meet up to 50% of the cost.

Where can I find out more information?

If you have any queries in relation to your legal situation, your solicitor will be able to help. Otherwise please just give Estate Management a ring on **01462 476000** or email us at home@lgchf.com



LETCWORTH
GARDEN CITY
HERITAGE
FOUNDATION

Estate Management, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation,
Suite 401, The Spirella Building, Bridge Road,
Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 4ET
T 01462 476000 F 01462 476050
e-mail home@lgchf.com
www.lgchf.com

Application Form for Residential Window Moratorium Notice

Name

Address

Telephone Number

Mobile Number

Email Address

Details of the Windows

Number and location of windows

Date of Installation

Name of Installer

Checklist

I have enclosed:

Photographs on my home and each window

A copy of the manufacturer's specification or guarantee showing the date of installation, if available

Please send me further details of (tick box(es))

The Design Guide

Scheme of Management

Running a Business from Home

Heritage Grants

Trees & Hedges

Advisory Management Committee

Replacing Windows & Doors

Hard standings

The Heritage Foundation

Landlords Consent Process

I will ensure that the next purchaser of my property is aware of the need to obtain the consent of the Heritage Foundation.

I confirm I have read and understand the attached information.

Signed

Date

Please return this form and the above information to:

Estate Management, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation
Suite 401 Spirella Building, Bridge Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 4ET