

THINKING OF BUYING A LISTED BUILDING?

If so, you may find it helpful to read these notes before making your decision.

A listed building is a building of special architectural or historic interest and, as such, is included on a statutory list compiled by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Such buildings are a unique record of the art and craftsmanship of earlier generations. The total number of listed buildings represents only a small percentage of the national building stock. They are also a dwindling resource which cannot be replaced and must therefore be protected for the benefit of this and future generations.

Many people believe that listed buildings are a joy to own; but owning a listed building does bring a responsibility and expense that might not otherwise be incurred. There are special responsibilities on owners and the local planning authority (LPA) to ensure that buildings are properly maintained. Listed buildings cannot be allowed to fall into disrepair and the LPA can take action against the owner if it is concerned about the condition of a particular building. It is likely that repairs will have to be carried out using traditional methods and materials, often using specialist craftsmen, and this can be costly and time consuming.

A special form of planning permission, called listed building consent, is required for internal or external works of alteration, demolition or extension. Listed buildings are not museum pieces, frozen in time. They can be updated (e.g. new kitchens and bathrooms, wiring and plumbing) or even extended, but not if it is detrimental to the historic character.

Many buildings have been altered over the years but some, due to their size, form or special architectural or historic character, do not lend themselves to alteration. Special care needs to be taken when considering alterations or extensions in order to protect the very reason why the building was considered worthy of listing in the first place. If all the buildings are extended with each generation there will be no small scale historic buildings left. For this reason the LPA has to consider very carefully the desirability and necessity for extensions and other alterations.

If you are thinking of buying a listed building in Mole Valley District but realise immediately that it does not meet your specific requirements, particularly in terms of the space provided, then please seriously consider if it is the right building for you. It may be more appropriate to look for a larger building and leave the smaller buildings for those who do not need extra space. You are therefore advised not to buy a listed building in the hope that you will get consent for alterations, especially extensions. You may end up being disappointed but discover this too late in the day.

REMEMBER

- Owning a listed building is a pleasure and a responsibility.
- Even minor works of alteration can require listed building consent.
- Unauthorised work to a listed building is a criminal offence.
- Listed buildings must be kept in a good state of repair.
- The ability to extend is by no means guaranteed and many listed buildings are not capable of further extension if the historic character is to be protected for future generations.
- If the building is not big enough for you then look for a larger one to avoid disappointment if you cannot extend.

An information booklet entitled 'Listed Buildings – an Owners Guide' is available to download via the Council web site www.molevalley.gov.uk and click on the links to Planning and Listed Buildings