Introduction

Mole Valley is a district rich in historic buildings. Many buildings have been 'listed' in order to protect and preserve them. This leaflet is designed to answer some of the most common questions asked by owners of listed buildings. A listed building is known as a 'heritage asset'.

It is not intended to be an exhaustive document covering every legal and technical aspect. For more specific advice it is advisable to contact the Council’s Planning Department at an early stage.

Why are buildings listed?

Historic buildings are part of our communal heritage, both locally and nationally. They provide a unique record of the craftsmanship of earlier generations.

These special buildings are a dwindling resource that cannot be replaced and must therefore be protected for the benefit of future generations. The stock of historic buildings is depleted not just through demolition, but also through neglect and insensitive or excessive alterations. Listing introduces a measure of control by placing special responsibilities on owners and the Local Planning Authority to ensure that buildings are properly maintained and are not altered or demolished without careful consideration. The listed building consent procedure exists to enable this to happen.

Which buildings are listed and what do the grades mean?

Buildings are selected for inclusion on the list drawn up by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), following the recommendations of Historic England. They are chosen for a number of reasons, including their architectural style, historical associations, unusual construction methods, or their value as part of an attractive group. As a rough rule of thumb, the older the building and the less it has been altered, the more likely it is to be listed. They can be large or small, grand or humble and can also include structures such as milestones, monuments, telephone boxes and village pumps.
The statutory lists for Mole Valley were substantially updated in the 1980s and early 1990s. With the addition of some buildings since then, there are now over 1,000 listed buildings in the District. The majority are listed at Grade II (95%); buildings of particular importance, perhaps with outstanding internal features, are Grade II* (4%) and a few of exceptional interest such as medieval churches, are listed at Grade I (1%).

The lists are not closed and more buildings will be added as further discoveries are made and perceptions about that which is architecturally or historically valuable change.

Is my building listed?

When a building is first listed Historic England will officially notify the owner and the District Council. New purchasers of listed buildings will be notified through the Local Authority Search. If you are unsure whether or not your property is listed you can check by contacting the Historic Environment Officer on 01306 879192 (peter.barker-mills@molevalley.gov.uk).

What does the listing include?

It is a common misconception to believe that the listing only covers the frontage or exterior of a property. In fact, the whole of the building is covered, both inside and out, and this includes any modern extensions physically attached to the building. Internal features such as staircases, fireplaces, panelling and bread ovens are protected as they are an essential part of the building's character. The same level of protection applies to a Grade II building as to a Grade I listed building.

Any free-standing building or structure which formed part of the curtilage before 1st July 1948, is also considered to be part of the listed building. Such structures may include boundary walls, outbuildings, garden ornaments, and the like. The definition of the curtilage of a building is a complex matter and common sense must be exercised. In short, the curtilage is land that has had a close and contiguous relationship with the listed building over many years.

The subdivision of part of the curtilage from the building by hedges or fences does not necessarily exclude it from listed building controls.
Can I alter or extend my listed building?

The listing of a building does not mean that it must be preserved as a museum piece without any form of alteration or extension to suit modern requirements. However, it is essential that any work which affects the character of the building is only carried out after listed building consent has been obtained from the District Council.

Work which affects the character can include alterations to the fabric of the building, such as roofs, walls and floors, windows and doors (even if they are modern) and to mouldings. The use of artificial materials, such as PVCu, aluminium and plastic, is not acceptable for work relating to historic listed buildings. Sealed unit double glazed windows, even in timber, are usually equally inappropriate. The use of traditional styles, materials and construction methods is strongly encouraged.

Listed buildings can sometimes be extended, provided that the addition is sympathetic in design and materials and respect is shown for the scale and form of the original building. However, some buildings cannot accommodate an extension due to their particular architectural design, simple vernacular form or their location. In other cases a smaller extension than originally planned may be the only acceptable solution.

It is always advisable to seek advice from the Council's Planning Department if you are considering making alterations to or extending your property. Generally it will be necessary to engage an architect, surveyor or other appropriately qualified building professional with design expertise in historic buildings to draw up a scheme.

How do I apply for listed building consent?

Application forms for listing building consent are available from Mole Valley District Council (details on the back page). Full and accurate drawings showing the property as it is now and as it would be after the work is completed, along with a supporting Heritage Statement explaining what is known about the history and significance of the heritage asset, how the proposed work will impact on the historic fabric, character and setting and why the work is considered desirable or necessary, should be submitted as part of the application. Photographs and other supporting material will often also be useful.

Once the application has been received the Council will advertise it on site and in the local newspaper. Various interested parties, such as immediate neighbours and the Parish Council, will be consulted. Historic England will be consulted if the work affects the fabric or setting of a Grade I or Grade II* listed building or if there is substantial demolition of a Grade II listed building. The national amenity societies (The Ancient Monuments Society, The Council for British Archaeology, The Georgian Group, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, The Twentieth Century Society...
and the Victorian Society) will also be consulted if the application involves demolition. The response of all those consulted will be taken into account when a decision is made.

If consent is granted, the applicant has up to three years to commence the work. There is no charge for an application but a fee will be charged for planning permission should it be required. As with all buildings, approval under the Building Regulations may be necessary for works to a listed building. However, it is generally recognised that if the character of the building is to be preserved, the work may not have to meet the standards expected of new construction. Once again early discussion with the Local Authority Building Control team should result in a scheme that satisfies all parties.

**What about maintenance and repair of my listed building?**

There is a fine distinction between maintenance and repair to a listed building and alterations that require listed building consent. The removal of original materials such as timber windows, lath and plaster, wattle and daub and their replacement with modern alternatives such as PVCu, expanded metal lath or plasterboard is an alteration requiring consent. The progressive loss of original materials and details in the course of repair work can erode the architectural and historic value of the whole building. The aim should be to engage in a programme of consolidation and repair rather than to carry out wholesale replacement.

Day-to-day repairs and redecoration, except in rare circumstances, are unlikely to require consent. This also applies to works to plumbing, heating and electrical services, provided that the structure of the building and historic details remain untouched. The repainting of the exterior of listed buildings in different colours may require consent, as does the cleaning of brick, stone and timber using abrasive methods.

It is always advisable to check with the Council’s Conservation Section before work commences, and repairs and maintenance should only be carried out by builders and craftsmen with proven experience of historic buildings. For instance, it is especially important that traditional lime mortar or plaster is used when repainting or re-rendering historic buildings.
Is grant aid available?

Depending on the type of work that is being undertaken, the Surrey Historic Buildings Trust may be able to offer grant aid through its ‘Small Grants Scheme’. This scheme aims to encourage the restoration or conservation of significant architectural features by offering financial assistance to a maximum of £3,000 for an individual project. The Trust can grant aid work to a wide range of architectural features including brickwork, masonry, window glazing bars, paving, gates or railings.

Historic England operates various grant schemes but demand for its resources is high and is usually restricted to outstanding Grade I and Grade II* buildings.

Do I have to pay VAT?

Current legislation means that VAT is payable on all work to listed buildings, the only exemption being the repair and maintenance of listed places of worship.

Can listed buildings be demolished?

The stock of historic buildings is a finite resource and every effort should be made to protect and preserve it. Listed building consent is required to demolish all or part of a listed building and a strong justification will be needed before consent is given, including clear evidence that there is no viable alternative use for the building and no-one is willing to buy the property on the open market.

The unauthorised demolition of a listed building, or even its alteration without consent, is a criminal offence. The National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF), national legislation and local plan policies clearly rule out demolition unless all other options have been fully explored and found to be unworkable. All applications for total or substantial demolition are referred to Historic England.

Can buildings be added to or removed from the list?

Despite the comprehensive surveys of historic buildings that have been carried out it is possible that some eligible properties have been overlooked. The DCMS is therefore prepared to consider recommendations for buildings to be added to the list, though priority will be given to buildings under threat. The DCMS also recognises that an increasing number of buildings from the late 19th and 20th centuries are of architectural interest and particularly good examples of modern buildings may now be considered for listing. Requests to de-list buildings will also be considered where new evidence can be produced to show that they are not of listable quality.

The list of listed buildings and other heritage assets can be found at www.historicengland.org.uk/listing where there is also advice about adding buildings to or removing them from the list.
Useful Contacts

Ancient Monuments Society  
St. Ann’s Vestry Hall  
2 Church Entry  
London  
EC4V 5HB  
020 7236 3934  
www.ancientmonumentssociety.org.uk

Council for British Archaeology  
Beatrice De Cardi House  
66 Bootham  
York  YO30 7BZ  
01904 671417  
new.archaeologyuk.org

Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
100 Parliament Street  
London  
SW1A 2BQ  
020 7211 6000  
www.gov.uk/dcms

Dorking and District Museum  
The Old Foundry  
62 West Street  
Dorking RH4 1BS  
01306 876591  
www.dorkingmuseum.org.uk

Historic England (South East Region)  
Eastgate Court  
195 - 205 High Street  
Guildford  
GU1 3EH  
01483 252000  
www.historicengland.org.uk

Leatherhead Museum  
Hampton Cottage  
64 Church Street  
Leatherhead  
KT22 8DP  
01372 386348  
www.leatherheadlocalhistory.org.uk

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings  
37 Spital Square  
London  
E1 6DY  
020 7377 1644  
www.spab.org.uk

Surrey County Council Historic Buildings Officer  
01483 581758

Surrey Historic Building Trust (grants)  
020 8541 9419

Surrey History Centre  
130 Goldsworth Road  
Woking  
GU21 6ND  
01483 518737  
www.surreycc.gov.uk/surreyhistorycentre

The Georgian Group  
6 Fitzroy Square  
London  
W1T 5DX  
020 7529 8920  
www.georgiangroup.org.uk

The Twentieth Century Society  
70 Cowcross Street  
London  
EC1M 6EJ  
020 7250 3857  
www.c20society.org.uk

The Victorian Society  
1 Priory Gardens  
Bedford Park  
London  
W4 1TT  
020 8994 1019  
www.victoriansociety.org.uk
Alternative formats

If you need this document in an alternative language/format, please contact the Communications Team on 01306 885001 or communications@molevalley.gov.uk