Householders' Guide to Windows

RBKC Householder
Greening Guides

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Contents

1 Introduction

Introduction

This guide provides information on the options available to upgrade your windows and the permissions you may require. The guide is intended to help you make informed decisions, whether you are a leaseholder or freeholder, live in a conservation area or your building is listed.

Although the focus of this guide is on windows, it is important to consider that a whole house upgrade is the most effective approach. This is because a whole house upgrade can ensure that all the interventions operate well together and result in greater energy savings. You can find more advice and information in our **Householder's guide to the Greening SPD**. A sequence of steps that could be undertaken as part of a whole house plan is set out in Table 1 below.

This guide predominantly focuses on planning permission and listed building consent. If you are a leaseholder of your property, you may need to ask permission from your freeholder too. Always check your lease agreement before starting work on your home.

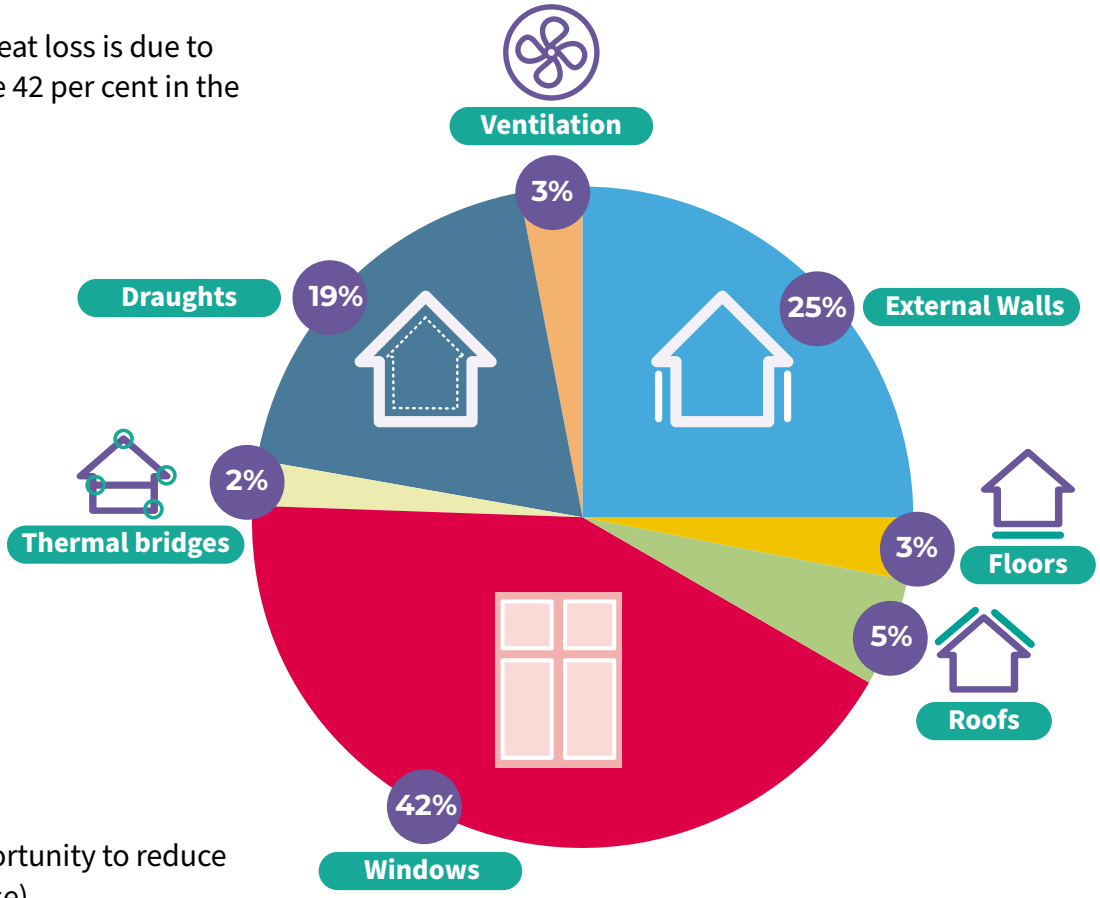
Table 1: Typical simple whole house plan

	Typical Simple Retrofit Plan		Cost considerations
	Step 1	**Insulate Loft**	Grants may be available.
	Step 2	**Repair / replace windows if needed and improve ventilation**	Replacement windows may be costly so may not be afforded at the same time as step 3.
	Step 3	**Swap boiler for heat pump**	Air source heat pumps may be costly and may not be afforded at the same time as step 2.
	Step 4	**Install solar PV / solar thermal on the roof**	Smart meters should be installed at the same time to get the best tariffs.

Windows and energy efficiency

Buildings lose heat from all points of contact with the elements such as the roof, floor, walls, doors and windows. Windows offer the most significant opportunity to reduce heat loss from a home and thereby the most significant opportunity to improve energy efficiency.

Generally, between 30 to 50 per cent of the heat loss is due to windows and Figure 1 below shows this to be 42 per cent in the case of a typical Victorian house.



Windows represent the most significant opportunity to reduce heat losses (42% in the case of Victorian house)

Figure 1. Heat loss in a typical Victorian homes

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What permissions do I need?

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Check if you need planning permission

You do not need planning permission for:

- 'Like for like' window replacement
- Draught proofing
- Internal shutters or heavy curtains
- Internal secondary glazing

'Like for Like' window replacement

These are exact replicas or replacement windows of the same material, style, pattern, frame dimensions and glazing bar profile. This can include replacing a single glazed window with a double-glazed window as long as it still looks like an exact replica.

Planning permission is not required whether the property is a flat or a house, including in a conservation area.

'Similar' appearance window replacement

These are windows of a similar appearance to the ones you are replacing, so they are of the same material, style, pattern and design with minimal differences in frame dimensions and/or integrated glazing bar profiles. For the avoidance of doubt, the Council considers that there is a stark difference in materials such as replacing timber windows with uPVC and this is not considered to be of similar appearance.

Planning permission is not required if the property is a house, including in a conservation area. However, flats require planning permission. More details are set out below.

Not similar

- Different materials
- Different style and pattern
- Significant differences in frame dimensions
- Significant differences in glazing bar profiles

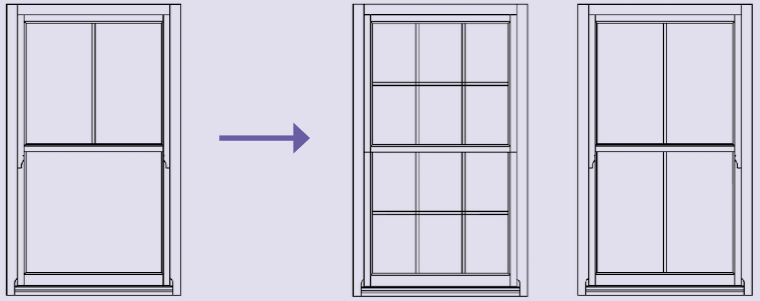


Figure 2. Examples of changes to windows that would not be considered similar

Replacing with similar windows

Whether or not you need planning permission to replace your existing windows with similar ones will depend on:

1. Type of property

If you live in a flat – You will require planning permission to change your windows (including if you live in a converted flat).

If you live in a house – Most houses if they are not listed, do not need planning permission to replace existing windows with similar windows (as described in the green box above). This is because planning legislation has granted permitted development rights for houses.

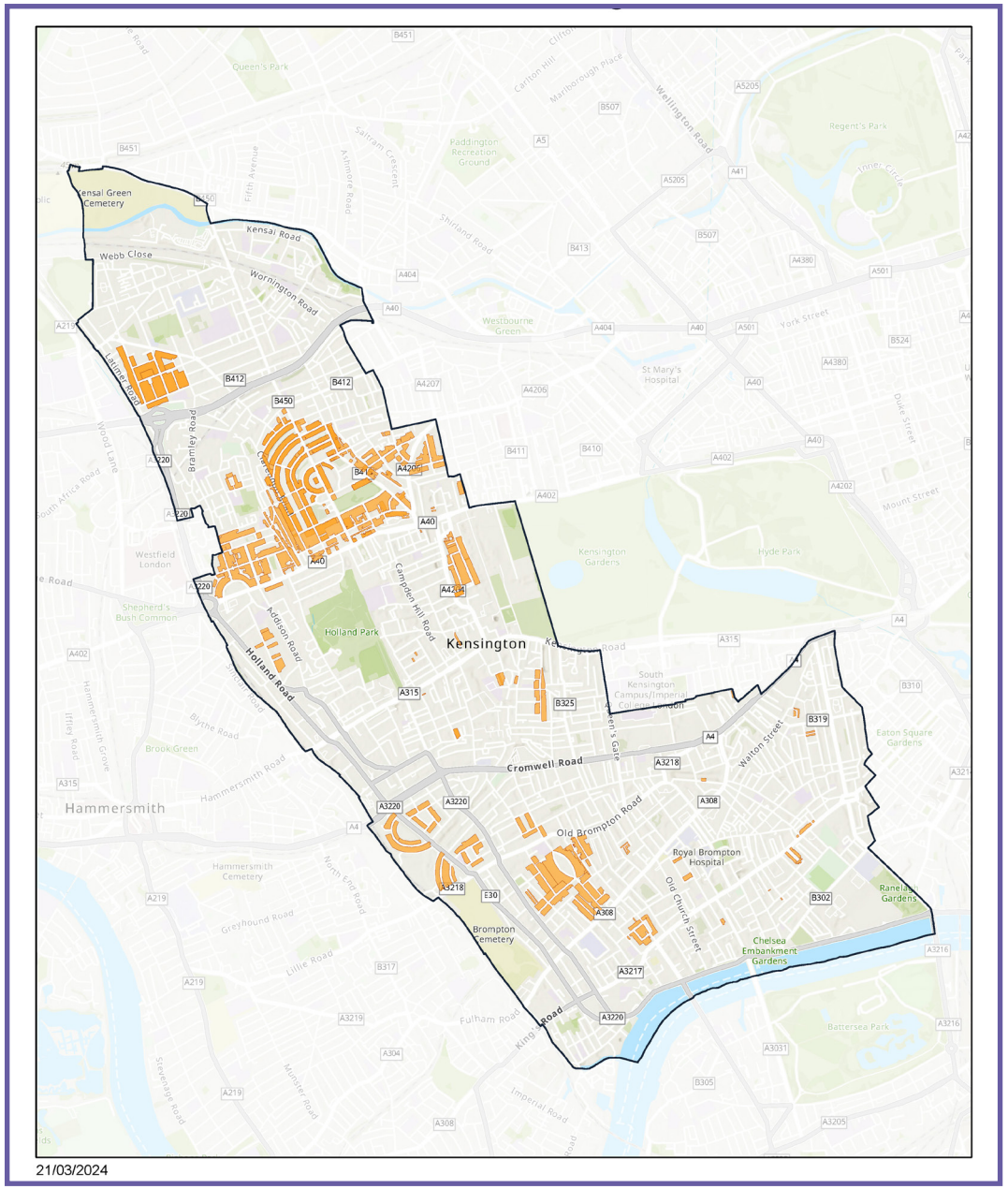
If you are making more significant changes, you will need planning permission.

2. Conservation areas and listed buildings

Some properties in Conservation Areas need planning permission as they are covered by a special direction introduced locally (called an Article 4 Direction) removing permitted development rights. An illustrative map is provided below (Figure 2) but please use our **interactive map** to see if this applies to your property. When you open the map, on the left-hand menu expand to see (all) "Planning Layers" and tick the box next to "Article 4 Directions".

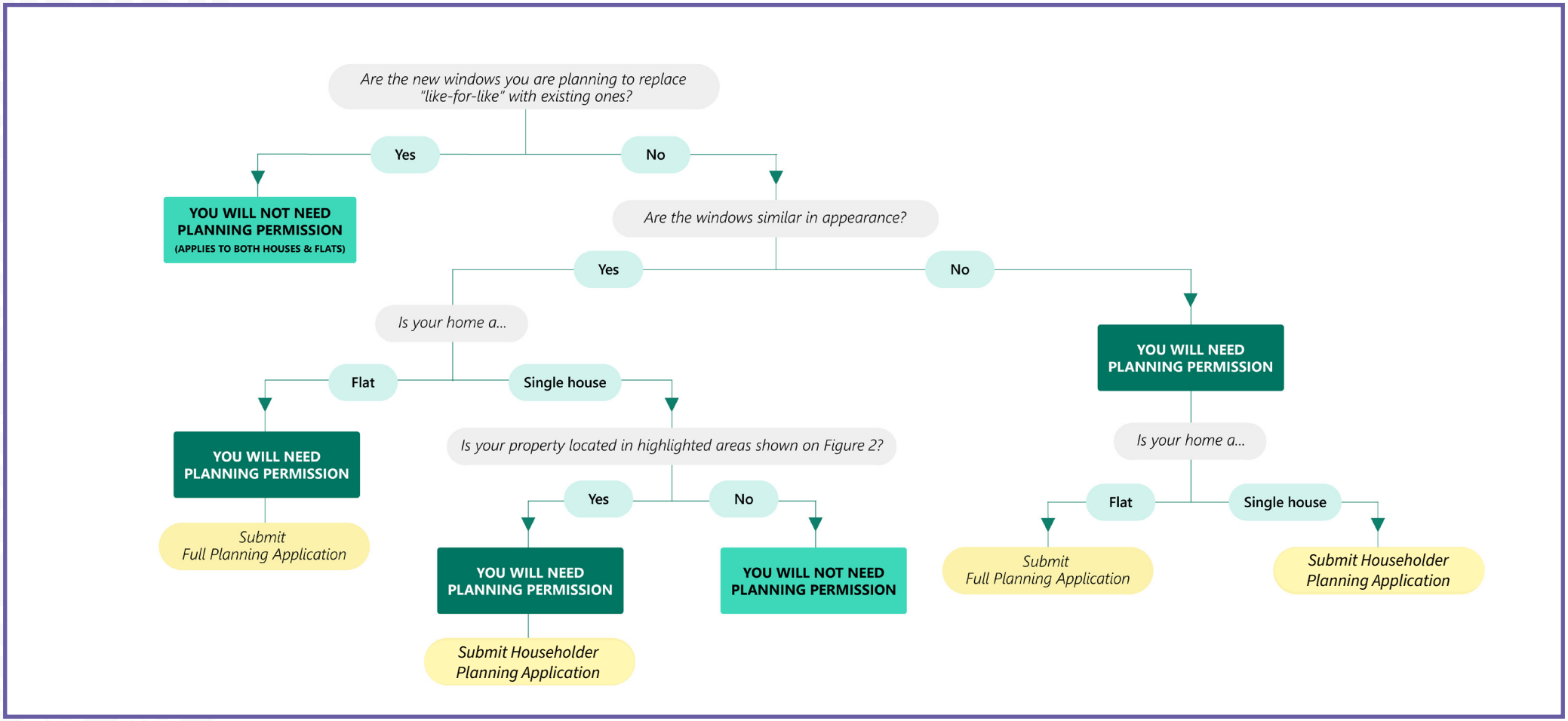
If your property is listed, please see the next section as different rules apply. You may need to get Listed Building Consent as well as planning permission.

Figure 3. Areas where you will need planning permission for minor alterations, including works to windows (use our interactive map to see if this applies to your property).



Do I need planning permission?

Figure 4. Decision tree illustrating when planning permission will be required for replacing domestic windows



Check if you need listed building consent

Any works that may affect the architectural or historic interest of a listed building needs **Listed Building Consent**. However, the Council has taken a proactive approach for granting consent to upgrade windows in Grade II listed buildings in certain circumstances.

Where listed buildings are concerned, it is always best to check with the Council. You can call planning line on **0207 361 3012**.

Check if your building is listed and what level of importance it has (Grade I, Grade II* or Grade II) by using our **interactive map**.

All Grades - You do not need Listed Building Consent for

- Window maintenance
- Curtains

Grade I and II* - You need Listed Building Consent for

- Draught proofing
- Internal or external shutters
- Secondary glazing
- Window repair involving removal of any original fabric including the glazing

Grade II Listed Buildings and Local Listed Building Consent Order (LLBCO)

The majority of listed buildings in the borough are Grade II listed and for these buildings the Council has proactively granted consent for some window works under a **'Local Listed Building Consent Order'**.

Grade II - You do not need Listed Building Consent for

Existing	Do not need Listed Building Consent to install/change to
All Grade II listed buildings	Internal secondary glazing
Existing window, fanlight, glazed or part-glazed external door in an authorised extension to a listed building which was constructed post listing.	A double-glazed window or door or replacement of a single-glazed pane of glass with an insulated glass unit or vacuum glazing unit.
Authorised existing window, fanlight, glazed or part-glazed external door where the window or door was installed in a listed building post listing.	A double-glazed window or door, or replacement of single glazed panes with insulated glass units or vacuum glazing units.

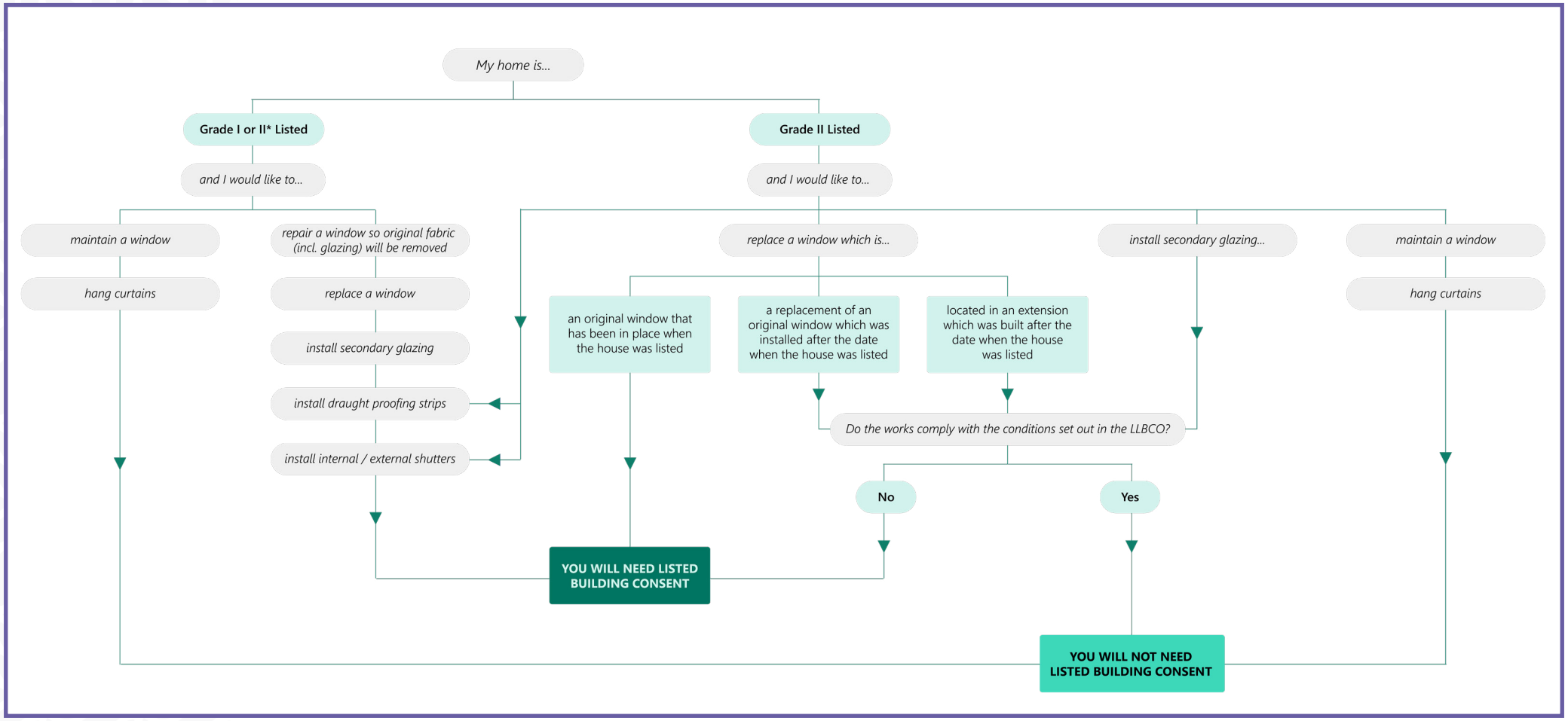
Please note that the works granted consent are subject to conditions and you must read the Local Listed Building Consent Order before undertaking any works.

Grade II - You need Listed Building Consent for

- Internal or external shutters.
- Secondary glazing / replacement windows that would not comply with the conditions of the Local Listed Building Consent Order.

Figure 5 below should enable you to find out if you need listed building consent.

Figure 5. Decision tree for window works in Listed Buildings (applies only to residential buildings)



I wish to get confirmation that I do not need planning permission or other consent

By following the above guidance, you may be satisfied that you do not need planning permission or listed building consent. However, you can get an official confirmation of this from the Council. This might be useful for when you decide to sell your property and the buyers ask for proof that the changes you have made did not need planning permission.

If so, you can apply for a **Certificate of Lawful Proposed Development** to show that the intended changes to your windows do not require planning permission.

If your building is listed, you can apply for a **Certificate of Lawful Proposed works to a Listed Building**.

Do I Need Building Regulations Approval?

Building regulations apply to all replacement windows. For more details, **please read this useful national guide**. It provides building control information for anyone looking to start building works or major repairs to their home including windows.

You do not need building regulations approval if:

The installation of a new window is carried out by an installer registered with a 'Competent Person' Scheme. These installers can self-certify that the installation meets building regulations and issue a "certificate of compliance". You can find more information on the Competent Person Register website.

You will need building regulations approval if:

- The installer is not on the competent person register. This includes if you install the window yourself; or,
- If the window opening is new or enlarged.
- In this case, you will need to submit a Building Notice Application, which you can do online on our website.

What must I do if I am a leaseholder?

Get permission from your freeholder

If you live in a flat, you are probably a leaseholder and you may need to get permission from your freeholder to ensure you are not in breach of any conditions in your lease. This is a private matter between you and the freeholder and separate to any of the planning, listed building or building regulations requirements described above.

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Possible interventions?

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Common window types in the borough

Most of the windows in residential buildings in the borough are likely to be timber sliding sashes. Other common window types are timber casement windows (these are hinged normally from the side so open in or out but can be hinged from the top), and metal framed windows. There are of course other more unique and special window types in the borough such as large artists' studio windows with the odd opening light, but these are dealt with on their own merits and **the guide is written for the common window types**. If you have a unique or special window, please contact the planning department on **0207 351 3012** for more advice or guidance.

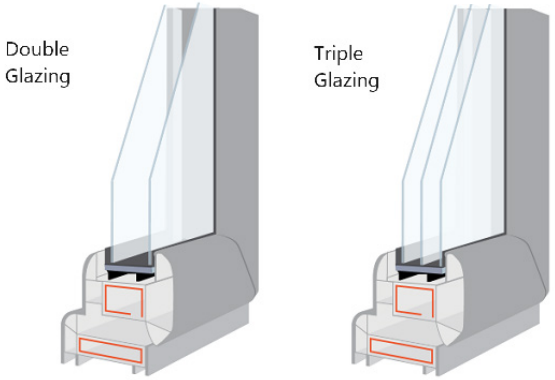
Possible interventions at a glance

	 Windows replacement (double glazed sash)	 Thermally efficient glazing within existing frames	 Secondary Glazing	 Draught proofing	 Internal shutters
Advantages	Improved thermal performance.	Original window frames preserved.	Less disruptive installation process. Original window is preserved.	Low-cost and effective solution to reduce draughts.	Original window is preserved. Can improve the aesthetic appeal of the home.
Disadvantages	Can be costly.	Less efficient for multi-paned windows than secondary glazing, due to the thermal bridging through the frame and glazing bars.	Repairs are needed to make the existing window good first, which adds to the costs.	Regular maintenance is necessary to ensure continued effectiveness.	Shutters can be a relatively expensive option.
Watch points	Use integral glazing bars and not fake astragals.	The original astragals are altered to fit in the new glazing.	Ensure effective cleaning is possible Ensure it allows adequate ventilation. Check it does not interfere with existing shutter boxes.	Ensure the strips are the right size to fill the gaps in your window. Ensure adequate ventilation is maintained to prevent moisture problems.	If building is listed, Listed Building Consent will be required for new internal shutters.
Measure of heat loss (U-value) (the lower the better)	~1.2 - 1.6 (double glazed)	~ 1.1	~ 2.0	No change to the U-value, but window airtightness can be significantly improved, reducing the air leakage up to 85%.	Timber shutters can reduce heat loss up to 58%, thick curtains up to 41% and lain roller blinds up to 38%[1] .

[1] Historic England (2009) Research into the thermal performance of traditional windows: timber sash windows.

Possible interventions in more detail

Installation of new windows (double glazing)



Double or triple glazing is formed by two or three window panes separated by a gap filled with air or another gas such as Argon, to create an insulating barrier limiting heat transfer through windows. The panes are separated with spacers that should be designed to prevent heat loss and condensation. There are slim profile options as well as those with coatings which reflect radiant heat back into the internal spaces (low emissivity coatings), improving the thermal performance of the glass unit.

Conventional double-glazed units are 22 - 28mm thick overall. 'Slim-profile' double-glazing (also known as 'slimline' or 'slim-cavity') which is more suitable for historic buildings has a narrower gap between the panes of glass and ranges in total thickness between 10-16mm. These are more suited to the historic building stock in the borough.

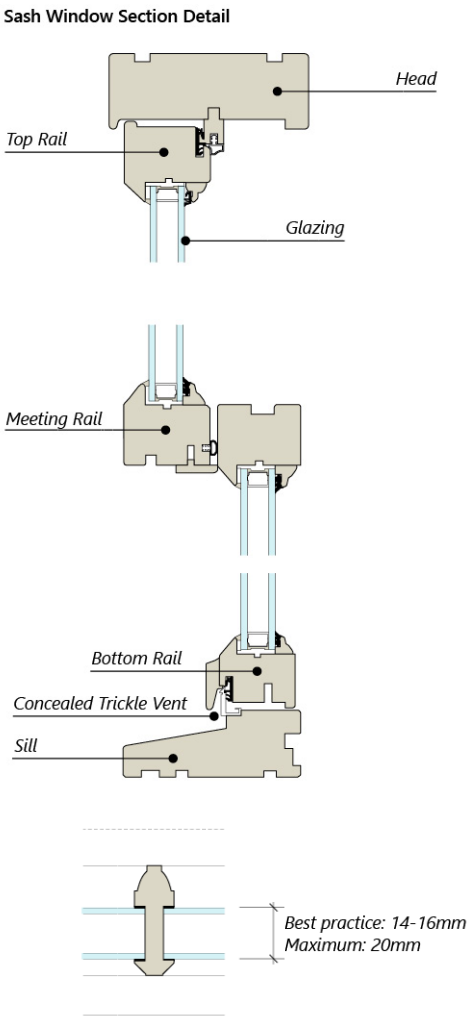


Figure 6. Double-glazed sash window. Astragal detail (bottom). Head-midrail-cill detail (above).

Historically large glass panes could not be manufactured, and it was more common for smaller individual panes of glass to be integrally held by glazing bars. This allowed several panes to sit within the frame allowing windows to be much larger.

Modern double-glazed windows sometimes can have glazing bars that are stuck on the glass rather than integral to the frame. In a listed building or in a conservation area integral glazing bars should be used as this authentic approach ensures that the character of the designated asset or area is preserved. Where glazing bar profiles exist in a window, these should be replicated like-for-like. Some of the common profiles in the borough can be seen in Figure 7.

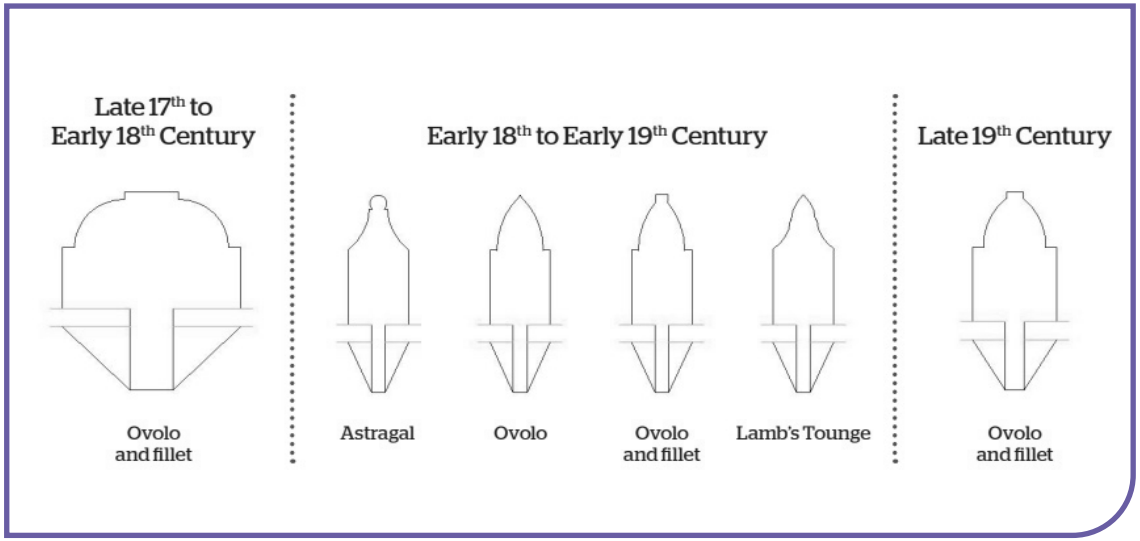


Figure 7. Common glazing bar profiles.

Issues to consider

- Consider ventilation as condensation may build up in your house due to increased airtightness of the new window. If your house does not have much background ventilation, look for replacement windows with concealed trickle vents incorporated into the frame to let in a controlled amount of ventilation (see Figure 6).
- Good ventilation is also important for the air quality in your house.
- You may need planning permission and listed building consent.
- Building Regulations Compliance required.
- Design should be sympathetic to existing building.

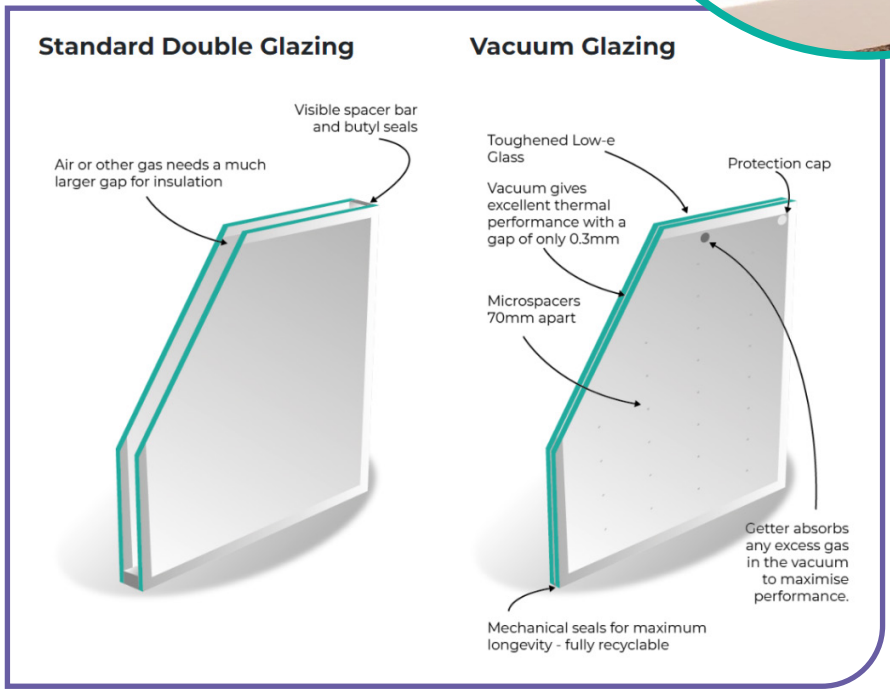
Thermally efficient single or double glazing within existing frames

Thermal single glazing and slim section double-glazed insulated glass units can in some circumstances be retrofitted into the existing frames. Insulated glass units are glazing units made up of two or more panes of glass, spaced apart and factory sealed hermetically. A more recently developed type of insulated glass unit is 6.5mm thick with a miniscule cavity from which the air is removed to create a vacuum.

In case of listed buildings, the preservation of historic glass would be the priority as per the legislative requirement, and replacing glazing in original historic windows would be considered unacceptable. In such cases secondary glazing is a more appropriate solution.

Issues to consider

- Existing frames need to be robust enough to support the increased thickness and weight of double glazing.
- Planning permission is normally not required unless you intend to replace standard glass with tinted glass. For listed buildings see section 2 above.



Secondary glazing

Secondary glazing is a fully independent window system installed to the room side of existing windows. The original windows remain in place unaltered (without draught-proofing to prevent possible condensation). This is a good and cost-effective option which allows historic windows to be retained.

Issues to consider

- Be careful when installing secondary glazing to avoid damage to existing windows if shutters are present.
- Avoid draught-proofing primary glazing, so some ventilation remains in the interspace between the windows. This will reduce the condensation risk.
- Planning permission not required, regardless of whether you live in a flat or a house.
- For listed buildings see section 2 above.

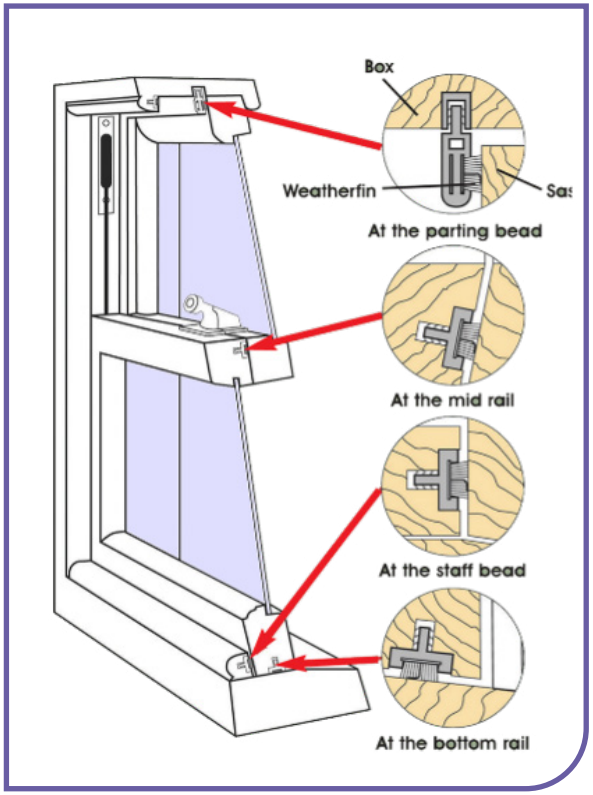
Draught-proofing

Simple draught-proofing measures are an effective and affordable means of substantially improving windows energy efficiency involving minimal alteration. This is usually done by installing draught-proofing seals in places where gaps are present.

There are two main types of draught-proofing seals: Compression seals are great for sealing narrow, even gaps; while wiper seals are capable of sealing a range of gap sizes and adapt to fill uneven gaps well.

Issues to consider:

- Ensure that draught-proofing products meet British Standard (BS7386) benchmark.
- Ensure that some ventilation of the room remains, this will help to avoid potential moisture problems.
- Planning permission is not required regardless of whether you live in a flat or a house.
- If seals require a narrow groove cut to be chased into windows or frames and your building is Listed – you will need Listed Building Consent.



Internal shutters

Blinds and shutters are a cost-effective solution, especially when combined with other measures.

Internal shutters can be used as a thermal regulator, by closing them at night to retain heat, and during the day to limit the amount of solar gain entering the room and thus reducing the temperatures inside. Historic buildings may already have existing shutters – if in poor condition they may be restored to working order, and if missing, consider reinstating them. Where there is no clear evidence of previous shutters then the merits of installation will be weighed against the impact on the significance of the building if it is listed.

Issues to consider

- Planning permission is not required regardless of whether you live in a flat or a house.
- If your building is Listed, you will need Listed Building Consent for new internal shutters but sensitive design that replicates the original is likely to be acceptable.

4

How to make a planning application to replace your windows?

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Householders' Guide to Windows

Identify the relevant planning application type

You are advised to submit planning applications electronically, using **the Council's Planning Portal**. The type of planning permission you need is explained in Section 2 and in particular Figures 4 and 5.

Planning application timescales

Normal application route

Planning applications and Listed Building Consent normally take eight weeks to determine from the point the application when we validate and officially register an application (after we have received all necessary documents) to issuing of the decision.

Fast Track Service

The **Fast Track Application Service** is an optional service that speeds up the administration and review of certain types of applications. This includes householder planning applications. These are:

- Usually determined within 28 days following receipt of the application and fast-track fee.
- Lawful Development Certificate applications within 10 working days following receipt of the application and fast-track fee.

Planning Advice Service

If you want to get formal advice on your proposals before submitting a planning application or Listed Building Consent, we also offer a paid for **planning advice service**. Using this service will provide help and guidance for the more complex cases resulting in a positive outcome when you do make an application.

Your planning application checklist

Completed application form

See Figure 4 for the type of planning application form you need or Figure 5 if your building is listed and you need Listed Building Consent.

All forms can be accessed on our **"How to make a planning application"** page.

Site location plan

Map at a scale of 1:1250 or 1:2500.

Application site must be edged with a red line & include all land required for the proposed development. You can read this **national guide on how to prepare a site location plan** and you can **buy a plan online**.

Site plan

At a scale of either 1:200 or 1:500. You can read this national guide on how to prepare a site plan and you can buy a plan online.

Existing and proposed elevations drawings

Drawings at a scale of 1:50 or 1:100 (1:50 preferable), illustrating all relevant external parts. Show existing and proposed elevations beside each other.

All plans should include the paper size, scale bar, key dimensions and must show the direction of north.

Design and Access Statement – Only for Listed Building Consent applications Required for:

- Listed building consent applications.

Further information regarding what Design and Access Statement is expected to cover, can be found in **Note 6 of the Local Validation List** (page 23).

Your planning application checklist (continued)

Heritage Statement – Only for applications located within a Conservation Area or in a Listed Building

Required for:

- Listed building consent applications.
- Applications for substantial or total loss of a building in a conservation area.
- Applications for works affecting the setting of a listed building or conservation area.

Further information regarding what Heritage statement is expected to cover, can be found in **Note 22 of the Local Validation List** (page 36).

Appropriate Fee

When submitting an application via the Planning Portal you will be able to make an online payment through their system.

A Guide to the Fees for Planning Applications in England