

## Public Consultation Results of the Protected Buildings Questionnaire 2012

The Department consulted the public on the historic environment for 6 weeks between 27<sup>th</sup> April and 8<sup>th</sup> June 2012. The consultation was in the form of a questionnaire that asked a series of detailed questions on the attitudes of the community to the historic environment and protected buildings. It also sought to explore the options for an additional, less strict regime for buildings of interest at a local parish level.

The questionnaire was completed by 125 people. There were many additional comments of value in interpreting the response to the specific questions.

The questions sought the views of the public on the importance of the protection of the island's historic environment, what aspects of buildings of special interest are valued, what factors should be taken into account when deciding whether to list a building, on the strictness of the existing system and on alternative forms of protection to listing buildings.

Please note that for simplicity the figures expressed below relate to the percentage of positive respondents; the percentages of people who responded negatively are not reported, but can be approximately calculated from the details supplied. It should be noted that not all respondents answered every question. All comments are reported.

### Question 1

**We would like to know how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

I think the protection of the island's historic environment is:

- 60% said very important
- 39% said important
- 1% said they had no opinion

I think the protection of the island's buildings of special historic, architectural, traditional or other interest is:

- 58% said very important
- 40% said important
- 2% said they had no opinion

### Summary of comments:

- We need a full survey with new guidelines and expert input to remove anomalies and cover the whole island.
- Preserve buildings for interest and value, not just because they are old and adopt a flexible approach to modernisation
- Need to look at wider range of buildings, not just the old – WWII for example. But err on the side of caution elsewhere.
- Many protected buildings are not special or historic and to prevent modern alterations is unreasonable.
- Importance of historic buildings to Guernsey character.
- Supports comprehensive review of list to remove those that are not of sufficient value and add others that are. Support for modern materials in historic buildings.

- Need to preserve historic buildings but not large numbers of more recent buildings (under 100 years old)
- Listed buildings should be exceptional – most homes should be free of special controls.
- Support for protection of the island’s historic buildings on a graded and selective basis.
- Groups of buildings whose value is greater than any individual building in the group should be protected.
- Parts of buildings which are less highly prized than the whole should not be protected.
- Unique buildings should be maintained and preserved but specific criteria are needed for houses, which have to be adaptable to modern conditions or they will become dilapidated.
- Views of, and from, protected buildings should also be protected.
- Protection of exceptional buildings is easily justified, but many in St Peter Port and other parts of the urban area are protected with little justification. This inhibits modern repairs and adds costs to maintenance that many households cannot afford.
- Gothic revival buildings of 1860s not sufficiently recognised.
- Protection has to be realistic and reasonable.
- Protected buildings must be worthy of that protection and the features that are of value should be clearly noted – not every element of every protected building should be slavishly protected.
- History and identity should be passed on to future generations by protecting them while adapting to the needs of those using them.
- New development should reflect the context of the historic environment.
- The protection of buildings of historic or architectural interest is unarguably important but must not inhibit reasonable and urgent repair, the adaptation of buildings to new uses or the replacement or improvement of unimportant elements of buildings. Modern and economical methods and alternative options of merit should be encouraged rather than rigid standards of conservation.
- Protection should be sensible, practical and not an undue burden on building owners.
- Buildings of limited value should not be listed (often Conservation Area status will suffice), and a grading system should be applied to the rest. Relatively ordinary features of protected buildings should not be over-protected and imaginative proposals for re-use should be encouraged.
- Grants for expensive, historically authentic repairs should be given or buildings will become dilapidated.
- The Environment Department should adopt a positive attitude and work constructively with protected building owners wishing to renovate their property.
- Communities should revere the historic buildings of significance to their way of life and history.
- There are buildings of very significant value not on the list – ‘their souls are being destroyed.’
- Protection is very important but should not inhibit modernisation, for example of windows.
- The current list is very inconsistent with similar houses being treated differently.
- Modern upgrading should be allowed for protected buildings – indoor sanitation, double glazing, insulation.
- Protection of internal features of private houses is unimportant.
- The relics of the German occupation should be protected.
- All pre-1900 farmhouses should be protected.
- Too much demolition and alteration has taken place, and not enough upgrading with traditional materials and methods. Cheap is not always best.
- Grading of interest should determine the level of protection required.
- The historic environment is part of our heritage and cultural identity, our sense of who we are as a community. Its protection is essential.
- The old does not automatically have merit and there are practical modern alternatives giving the same effect as historic materials.
- Town needs protection from developers.

- The current protected buildings list is inconsistent and incomplete.
- Interiors of historic buildings are frequently overlooked and destroyed by modern materials and features. Grants or tax credits should be given to encourage authentic preservation.

### Department's Commentary

Responses to this question demonstrate overwhelming support for the protection of the historic environment and of the island's buildings of historic, architectural, traditional and other special interest.

The comments made reflect this strong support for protection. A significant number of comments were also concerned with how protection is achieved; issues of cost, of the need for buildings to be modernised, for protection to be proportionate to the quality of the building are mentioned here, as among comments on other questions in the survey.

### Question 2

#### **I value the island's buildings of special historic, architectural, traditional or other interest because:**

They are part of my feeling of identity as an islander:

- 34% said they strongly agree
- 39% said they agree
- 22% said they had no view either way

They are part of the community's shared history

- 44% said they strongly agree
- 52% said they agree
- 4% said they had no view either way

They give a good impression of Guernsey to the World

- 35% said they strongly agree
- 51% said they agree
- 12% said they had no view either way

They add to our knowledge of how past generations lived and worked

- 36% said they strongly agree
- 50% said they agree
- 12% said they had no view either way

They are of educational interest

- 28% said they strongly agree
- 52% said they agree
- 16% said they had no view either way

They support the economy

- 14% said they strongly agree
- 30% said they agree
- 30% said they had no view either way

They attract visitors to Guernsey

- 25% said they strongly agree
- 45% said they agree
- 18% said they had no view either way

They are attractive and interesting to look at

34% said they strongly agree

53% said they agree

10% said they had no view either way

They are important to the quality of island life

27% said they strongly agree

39% said they agree

21% said they had no view either way

**Summary of comments:**

- We owe it to future generations to protect our heritage.
- Not all buildings of real value or attractive to local people and do not support a fast moving economy.
- The survey asks obvious questions and does not address problems of over-listing and unrealistic restrictions.
- Buildings are of value if maintained and used – there has to be a balance if controls are so strict that they discourage this.
- Some landmark buildings contribute to the economy whilst listing others limits their economic use and viability.
- Protecting buildings is meaningless without appropriate enforcement. Investigation of archaeological remains should be required before any development. New uses should be found for redundant buildings.
- Protected buildings add to our knowledge of local construction and architecture and to the character of the island.
- Guernsey's heritage of ancient buildings is unique and of international importance
- Buildings 'tell part of the island's history that can't be told in books.'
- General agreement about the values of historic buildings, but we don't need large numbers listed to retain historical knowledge. Better a very selective list which the States are more involved in maintaining. Many current protected buildings do not reflect the values described.
- Art research and tourism would benefit from more research into historic architects builders and people.
- Values difficult to disagree with but difficult to relate to individual existing or future potential protected buildings.
- These values, used as criteria, would produce a very extensive list.
- These values help define Guernsey as a unique place with a unique identity.
- Sense of place comes from layers of history forming a continuum with the present – a living town not a museum.
- Education and information are the key to protecting buildings.
- Not all protected buildings are attractive to look at.
- Need to provide continuity with our past and demonstrate that we value it.
- Keep up the good work.
- Protected buildings are part of the future as well.
- Historic significance is important even if the building is not attractive or interesting in other respects.
- Commemorative and inspirational values are important.
- Historic buildings can inform future aesthetics.
- Historic buildings can be restrictive to modern commercial use – consider keeping only exterior. Recording information can be as good as keeping the building.

- Protection gives the message we care for our shared environment.

### Department's Commentary

All of the values set out in this question received strong support, but there is some gradation between them. The most valued aspect of protected buildings is that they are part of the community's shared history – 95% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Other aspects were also strongly valued. Between 85% and 87% agreed or strongly agreed that they valued the island's special buildings because they add to our knowledge of how past generations lived and worked, because they give a good impression of Guernsey to the world and because they are attractive and interesting to look at.

A slightly lower proportion valued them for their importance to education (80%) and to islanders' sense of identity (74%).

The lowest levels of agreement/ strong agreement were for the attraction of visitors (70%), importance to the quality of life (66%) and support to the economy (44%).

The comments suggest other values such as the way they provide continuity with the past, their role in inspiring the future and the importance of commemorative and inspirational values.

These results demonstrate a belief in a range of reasons to value the built heritage; distinctions in gradation do not support hard and fast conclusions, but it is interesting that there is such strong agreement about the idea of a shared heritage. The value of protected buildings as evidence of the past and as interesting and attractive objects appear more important than less tangible assets like quality of life, education and identity, leaving the economic value relatively less valued.

Comments generally confirm the high value that the respondents place on the island's built heritage and the concern that it is not lost.

Many comments in this section are concerned with the best way to ensure the protection of buildings of special interest. The inconsistencies of the current list are noted. The need to ensure that too strict a policy on conservation does not inhibit repair and maintenance or the creative re-use and adaptation of buildings and that it is proportionate to the quality of the building concerned emerges as a theme.

### Question 3

**When deciding whether to protect a building of special interest, the following is important:**

Its age

- 23% said they strongly agree
- 45% said they agree
- 20% said they had no view either way

Its historic associations

- 44% said they strongly agree
- 50% said they agree
- 6% said they had no view either way

Its architectural style/attractive appearance

- 37% said they strongly agree

49% said they agree  
10% said they had no view either way

Its value as a fine example of technical ingenuity

26% said they strongly agree  
47% said they agree  
13% said they had no view either way

Its value as a fine example of a particular type of building e.g. church or school

37% said they strongly agree  
50% said they agree  
11% said they had no view either way

### Summary of comments

- Value to the community is important
- The current list is very hit and miss – full review is required. Full review and better information on what is to be protected needed but does the Dept have the resources for this? Sceptical about protecting interiors.
- Uniqueness is most important. Need flexibility about adaptation.
- Where minor items are not in keeping with refurbished buildings they could be recorded and then removed.
- Practicalities are important. More selection should be used.
- Criteria difficult to apply to parts of the heritage, such as WWII buildings that are not attractive but of historic interest.
- It is important to compare similar buildings and only list the best.
- Minor alterations in modern materials should be allowed.
- A singular noteworthy building in the landscape is important.
- Age is not necessarily the criteria – quality should count.
- Modern materials and craftsmanship often superior to traditional.
- Historic buildings adapted and changed with the times, and this should continue.
- Age not the most important factor. Some new examples should be protected e.g. Liberation Monument
- Group value important
- Rarity important
- Age not the most important criteria and modern material should be permitted.
- Age is the most important criteria. All churches should be protected.
- Buildings like the Odeon should have been protected.
- More recent architectural styles such as arts and crafts and art deco should be considered.
- Listing should specify what it is important to protect after expert inspection rather than give blanket protection. Future maintenance costs should be considered.
- Fine examples of later periods should be considered eg art deco
- The whole range of buildings from fishermen's cottages to Georgian and Victorian villas.
- Group value is important. Some more modern buildings should be protected where they fit their context.
- Townscape contribution
- Relationship to historic events
- Value to the community and impact on the environment
- Age should be no barrier
- Technical innovation in an ugly building should not lead to protection

- L'Angle Tower, Fort Richmond, Guernsey brewery, Mirus Battery, boys Old Grammar, Old Mill – unique buildings important
- Archaeological, educational and commemorative values important

### Department's Commentary

This question is concerned with the importance of characteristics and qualities of buildings when deciding whether to protect them. The most important finding is the high degree of agreement with all of the suggested aspects.

A similar proportion of respondents agree that each aspect is important (between 45% and 50%). When the proportion of 'strongly agree' responses is added, a gap opens up between age (at 68%) and technical ingenuity (at 74%), which fall below the others - historical association (93%), architectural style (86%), traditional materials and craftsmanship (79%), and value as a fine example (87%).

In the case of 'age' this is for two reasons – buildings are not valued 'just because they are old' and, the other side of the coin, buildings from more recent periods are also considered interesting and important. This is significant in view of other findings of the questionnaire about attitudes toward age as a factor influencing whether or not a building should be listed.

### Question 4

#### Which of these statements do you agree with?

Only the most exceptional buildings should be protected

- 23% said they strongly agree
- 35% said they agree
- 6% said they had no view either way

The more recent the building, the more exceptional its quality to merit protection

- 12% said they strongly agree
- 31% said they agree
- 16% said they had no view either way

Buildings should be more likely to be protected if they survive in an unaltered form

- 15% said they strongly agree
- 34% said they agree
- 21% said they had no view either way

Buildings should be more likely to be protected if they are a rare survivor

- 44% said they strongly agree
- 46% said they agree
- 7% said they had no view either way

Buildings should be more likely to be protected if they have an interesting interior

- 18% said they strongly agree
- 27% said they agree
- 29% said they had no view either way

#### Summary of comments:

- Each building on its merits
- Interiors rarely seen or appreciated

- Criteria subjective.
  - Difficult to balance the statements – some seem mutually exclusive
  - Need to define exceptional and interesting
  - Protection should not be to the detriment of the building
  - Individual assessment of buildings and groups of buildings rather than a generalised approach
  - Admirer of the Generali building
  - There is no co-ordination about the existing list.
  - Buildings under threat should be more likely to be listed.
  - Interiors and less visible parts of buildings should always be taken into account.
  - Blanket formulae should not be applied – should depend on the individual building.
  - Monuments, walls, other historic structures and archaeology should also be protected.
  - Protection should not extend to uninteresting interior – encourages poor levels of maintenance.
  - All these factors need to be considered.
  - Special features such as tourelles and panelling should be considered when deciding whether to protect a building.
  - What the building tells us about Guernsey and the way it has changed and adapted over the years should be considered.
  - A finer consideration of the types and nature of buildings – gradings would help avoid generalisation.
  - Problem of listing interiors when the public has no access to or interest in them.
  - Survival from the past is somewhat random and does not guarantee special interest.
  - We should use and adapt what we have before building new.
  - Interiors of buildings should only be the owner's concern unless it is likely to be accessible by the public.
  - Guernsey farmhouses should not be split into separate units.
  - Interior are worth protecting but the new rules must be specific to ensure the correct level of protection and also the reasons why.
  - A grant system should be set up to defray the costs of maintenance for those without the financial ability to undertake works to the States' conservation specifications.
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- A building should have more than one or two interesting features to justify listing it.
  - Only the part that is of interest should be listed – e.g. an interesting fireplace.
  - Definitions of special quality will inevitably be subjective.
  - It should be possible to seek to bring protected buildings back to their original condition.
  - The total selection of the list should represent the diversity and rarity of the local historical environment.
  - Modest protection could apply to a large number of buildings but strict protection would need to be limited to a smaller number - i.e. numbers should be a function of the degree of protection.

### **Department's commentary**

This question addresses specific aspects of how judgements are to be made about listing and how the threshold should be set.

The two statements with the highest degree of agreement or strong agreement are that rare survivors (at 90%) and buildings with particularly interesting features (79%) should be more likely to be listed. The existence of an interesting setting is agreed or strongly agreed to be important by 60% of respondents.

47% agreed or strongly agreed that survival in an unaltered form should make listing more likely, but is not so unequivocal as to preclude the consideration of more altered buildings.

The proposition that the existence of an interesting interior should make listing more likely was the least well supported, by 44% - a view that is borne out in some of the comments made in relation to this and other parts of the questionnaire.

58% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that only the most exceptional buildings should be protected. This indicates that the threshold should be set relatively high. Interestingly, only 42% agreed or strongly agreed that if a building were more recent it would need to be more exceptional in quality to merit listing, which bears out the view noted elsewhere in the results that the quality of the building is more critical than its age.

Issues of proportionality, appropriate selection and a balanced approach to change, together with better information/ education about the special characteristics and interest of buildings are all raised under this question.

### Question 5

#### Which of these statements do you agree with?

The current system of protected buildings is too strict

52% said they agree

32% said they disagree

It would be helpful to grade protected buildings according to the quality of their special interest

92% said they agree

4.5% said they disagree

Conservation areas are a good way to protect unlisted buildings of character and interest

67% said they agree

19% said they disagree

Parish lists should be introduced to help protect buildings of character and interest that are not of enough quality to include in the protected buildings list

52% said they agree

33% said they disagree

#### Summary of comments:

- Conservation area protection needs to take account of the fact that some buildings within them are of little merit
- Justify listings by explaining why a building is protected.
- Parish list would not assist. Buildings should not be ossified.
- UK type grading system would help
- Conservation areas would not carry enough weight to protect special buildings
- Lower grades of building would complicate/slow the planning system – grading better
- If a building is important – list it rather than use lower forms of listing. Explain in detail why a building is listed to guide future development. Interior of houses should not be too strictly controlled.
- Too much modern intervention (plastic windows etc) have been allowed. But buildings should be allowed to evolve. Too much focus on detail rather than the bigger picture.
- Current list inconsistent and illogical
- Register should be island wide

- Island list would be more appropriate and consistent, though consultation with parishes would be a good idea
- Account should be taken of the fact that maintaining listed dwellings can be expensive and time consuming because of conservation requirements – some accommodation needs to be made to that.
- It should be made extremely clear what about a building is listed and what is of significance.
- If parish lists or conservation areas are to offer alternative protection, they need to explain to the public clearly how this is to be done.
- Materials conducive/ appropriate to Guernsey should be used – for example lots of modern cladding is not.
- ‘The system is too strict for those captured and too lax for those missed.’
- Unrealistic protection issues undermine interest in taking on protected buildings and reflect badly on the Department.
- The system needs more leeway in achieving modern standards of living – double glazed units in timber frames should be possible.
- A grading system would work if consistent and fair and the public is educated about what it means.
- The protection of historic buildings depends ultimately on the good will of owners and the Environment Department should not adopt a heavy handed and dictatorial stance.
- Up to date listing and Conservation Areas should be sufficient. System not too strict but needs a consistent and pragmatic approach.
- Conservation Areas would need careful definition to provide adequate alternative protection. Protection rather than preservation should be made clear.
- Parish lists unnecessary and open another avenue for inconsistency A policy response that is proportionate to the importance of what is to be protected is what is really required.
- Parish lists would introduce additional regulation and confusion.
- Conservation practice should be interpreted in a constructive way to encourage investment in historic buildings. Parish lists could be an avenue for nimbyism.
- Parish lists will result in inconsistent decisions. Part building listings should be considered.
- There is no role for parish lists – protected buildings should be protected.
- Too much fake heritage on the island – for example ‘The Old Quarter’ is a marketing idea with no historical roots.
- A balance is needed between conservation and the need to reduce emissions – e.g. double glazing.
- Parish lists will further complicate the process.
- Neighbours should be proactively informed of the status of buildings and of proposed developments – they can be the eyes and ears of the Department.
- The Department must beware of opening compromises which escalate into wholesale change. Protection needs to work in co-operation with building control e.g. accepting craft skills for repairs.
- Decisions on similar properties must be consistent, especially in the same street.
- There should be a sliding scale, giving more flexibility according to the calibre of the building.
- Infringements of planning control that harm historical interest must be more punitive.
- A grading system could provide an understanding of the significance of a building and the likely level of intervention that would be acceptable.
- Parish listing would need to be applied consistently to work. Restrictions should not be so strict as to inhibit innovation. People should be able to enjoy their own property not create a Disney version of history.
- Protected buildings cost a lot to keep up because of unreasonable regulation, while other properties are left in a mess.
- Protection should be an island wide issue.

- The system does not distinguish sufficiently between buildings – use balance and pragmatism. The system is in conflict with commercial viability and building regulations, costs a lot leading to degradation.
- There should be more protection in an island with such a fine building stock. Beware of fashionable ‘improvement’ that change the building and will be ‘dated’ quickly.
- Parish lists would be inconsistent. Several levels of grading with strong, simple, clear criteria would work with tighter controls over the buildings of most interest.

### **Department’s commentary**

This question addresses two issues. Whether respondents view the current system to be too strict and what alternative means of protecting buildings they consider would be effective and appropriate.

Over half of respondents (52%) regard the current system as too strict.

92% consider grading buildings according to their special character would be helpful.

67% consider that conservation areas offer a good protection.

52% favour the creation of local, or parish lists.

Although these are separate issues, many of the comments link them, both in relation to this and to other questions. Almost all respondents agree that buildings of special interest should be protected, however many do not consider all buildings, or all parts of the same building to be equally important. They therefore favour a system that creates a selective list and which links an assessment of the significance/ special character of the building, or relevant part of the building, to the likely level of change that would be acceptable. It would seem that it is not so much the strictness of the system as the fact that it should be proportionate to the importance of what is being protected that is the issue here.

Respondents appear to have taken a variety of views about what the grading of protected buildings and local or parish lists might mean in practice, which make any further interpretation of these results difficult.

### **Contact Us**

For further information at:

Planning Division

Environment Department

Sir Charles Frossard House

St Peter Port

GY1 1FH

Telephone: 01481 717200    Email: [planning@gov.gg](mailto:planning@gov.gg)

Go to [www.gov.gg/planning](http://www.gov.gg/planning) for other planning information