

EAVES, GABLES AND GUTTERS

The detail at eaves and gables should not be altered and decorative bargeboards, soffits, fascias etc., should be repaired or reinstated rather than replaced with inappropriate modern designs. Care should be taken when repairing roofs to make sure that roof lines remain exactly the same so that there will not be the need for any bulky boxed-out detailing at the eaves or gables.

Cast iron gutters, hopper heads and downpipes should be retained if possible. When replacement is necessary, cast iron is the most desirable option as it is still manufactured, but if this proves too expensive, cast aluminium is made to similar sections and would certainly be more appropriate than plastic.

CHIMNEYS

Chimneys are an important feature on Felixstowe's skyline and are an integral part of the design of all Victorian and Edwardian houses. All original stacks should be kept if at all possible and certainly the main stacks should be retained even if the chimney is no longer needed.

Stacks should not be reduced in height because it undermines the original design of the building and invariably involves the loss of decorative detailing. Where they were part of the original design, chimney pots should be retained or reinstated if they have been removed in the past.

WALLS

The older buildings in Felixstowe are virtually all built of local soft bricks with white lime mortar joints. Modern buildings are constructed with harder bricks with a grey cement mortar. The "soft" structure of older buildings has the advantage of allowing them to move to some degree, however, it does mean that the mortar joints can erode over time and that when walls become damp bricks may spall (this is where the face of the brick breaks away). Repairs and repointing are therefore sometimes going to be necessary.

You may think that the best way to remedy this is to repair the damage with a cement mortar and then to paint, render, pebble dash or stone clad your walls. This is certainly not advisable as excessive moisture can become trapped within the wall causing more damage, and these finishes could require more maintenance in the future than the original facing brick. Certainly, such a change will adversely effect the character and appearance of your house.

The careful cutting out of the damaged bricks by hand and repointing is what is required, but you must ensure that a soft lime mortar is used, mixed to match the existing and finished with a flush joint. A mortar with a high cement content is likely, in the long term, to cause a great deal of damage because it will trap moisture inside the bricks and will cause them to spall even more.

DORMER AND BAY WINDOWS



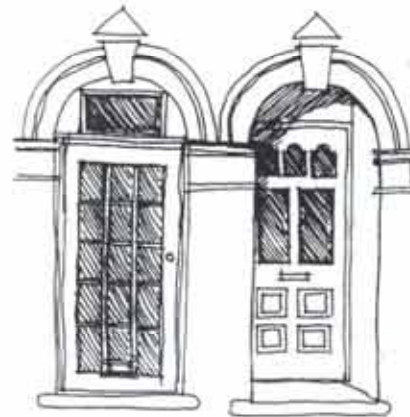
Loss of original details, including the addition of an overlarge dormer has seriously damaged the appearance of the house on the left.

Dormer and bay windows are distinctive features on many of the older houses in Felixstowe and should be retained in their original form. Bay windows in particular are a valuable asset to a house as they make the front room larger and lighter. However, if they are altered in an inappropriate manner they can undermine the appearance of the building and can actually devalue the property.

Alterations to existing dormer windows or the introduction of bulky, oversized or box-like flat roofed dormers should be avoided. Such changes can be particularly disruptive on buildings which form part of a unified terrace or group of houses.

PORCHES

If your property has an original projecting porch or canopy it is important this is retained. However, a typical detail on many Victorian and Edwardian houses is an open, recessed porch. Although it may be tempting to convert this space into a draught lobby by constructing a screen door across the front, the appearance of the property invariably suffers so it is important that this space should not be enclosed. It may sometimes be possible to form a draught lobby internally, beyond the existing front door, thereby not affecting the external appearance of the house at all.



Enclosing a recessed porch should be avoided.

New projecting porches and canopies pose a problem as they can disrupt the rhythm of the elevation of a terrace or a group of similar houses. Porches which do not respect the style of an individual property can also be very harmful, and therefore their design should be considered very carefully. If a porch or canopy cannot be added in a visually satisfactory way the temptation to add one should be resisted.

DETAILING

Decorative detailing was a favourite of the Victorians and Edwardians and it added that "final touch" to their buildings, so it is important that it is retained. In Felixstowe, elements such as moulded cornices, console brackets, string courses, column capitals, moulded or carved brick, terracotta work, decorative tiles, metalwork, stained glass and intricate joinery work were an essential part of the design of houses and are well worth retaining and repairing.

Modern additions to houses such as service connections for gas, electricity, telephone and televisions can all disfigure a building, especially attractively designed period houses. Make sure you know exactly what these utilities are proposing before they carry out any works to your house. They often use standard connection details because it is cheap and quick. With a little thought there may be better ways to accommodate these services without making such an adverse impact.

Meter boxes and satellite antennae can be particularly problematic. Meter boxes are now available which can be set in the ground so that nothing need be mounted on the building at all, or meters can be retained internally. Satellite antennae are likely to require planning permission especially if placed on the front elevation of a house, but in any event this should be avoided on any property in the Conservation Area.

FRONT GARDENS

The front gardens of houses and the treatment of their boundaries is invariably a prominent feature in the streetscene. When Felixstowe was first developed the original boundary treatments would have been a simple hedge, a timber palisade fence or a low brick wall. In some instances they could have been an elaborate design in brick, render or ornamental ironwork. Whatever the case they were very important to the attractiveness of the street.

Original boundary treatments, especially those built for a terrace or a group of houses, should not be altered or demolished, and every effort should be made to reinstate those which have been lost. If original boundaries (e.g. front railings) are missing then it is often possible to trace photographic evidence, or failing that, it may be appropriate to copy surviving examples elsewhere in the area.

If no evidence exists then simple timber palisade fencing, simple iron railings, or a low hedge would be appropriate in most cases. Alternatives, like "ranch style" fencing and precast concrete block walls, are wholly inappropriate and should not be used in the older parts of Felixstowe.

Every effort should be made to retain or reinstate the attractive tiled front paths with their decorative edgings. Once a common feature in the town, many have now been lost.

Generally, with the early houses in Felixstowe, it was only the larger properties which were designed with frontages large enough to comfortably accommodate driveways. With small houses, the terraced and semi-detached properties, the setting of the house and the character and appearance of the whole street can be severely damaged if the area in front was converted into car parking spaces.



Loss of original boundary detail and inappropriate use of front garden.

TO SUM UP

Your house is almost certainly going to be your most valuable possession. It pays in the long run to look after it properly - money spent on maintenance now can save costly repairs or replacements later. The loss or replacement of original features should be a last resort - there are plenty of people who are eager to sell you their products or services whether it suits your house or not.

Materials for repair or renovation should be chosen very carefully if your house is not going to look odd in relation to its neighbours. If it does end up "over modernised" then it may well be worth less than those which remain unaltered.

If your house has already lost some of its original features then reinstatement may be a possibility. Look at unaltered details on houses nearby, they will guide you in the right direction.

If you would like any further information or advice about repairing or improving your house or if you wish to know more about Felixstowe's Conservation Area then contact the Design and Conservation Section of the Planning and Leisure Department at Suffolk Coastal District Council offices or ring 01394 444616.



PRESERVING FELIXSTOWE'S VICTORIAN & EDWARDIAN HOUSES



Do you live in one of Felixstowe's older houses?

Do you want to be proud of your house?

Do you want it to increase in value?

Do you want it to contribute to Felixstowe's unique character and heritage?

- If you do then read on:

FELIXSTOWE'S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Felixstowe around the turn of the century was a very fashionable spa and seaside resort and its buildings reflected this. Well off people, builders and speculators employed the best architects of the period to prepare impressive designs for them and the buildings were often constructed using quality materials and high standards of workmanship. Even the modest terrace in Felixstowe was built to quite a high standard when compared to those being built at the same time elsewhere.

For many years, though, as fashions changed, Felixstowe's Victorian and Edwardian buildings were seen as being "old fashioned". As a result many were inappropriately altered, some unfortunately, were demolished. We now realise just how interesting and potentially valuable these buildings are in terms of Felixstowe's economic prospects as a town, as a seaside resort, and as a shopping and employment centre.

The character and appearance of all the old houses in Felixstowe is therefore important. When you need to repair, renovate or modernise your house think very carefully about the effect any changes may have. If you change the doors, the windows, or the materials of the walls and roof in an inappropriate way it will undermine the original design. Some changes cannot be reversed and the "period" character of a house could be lost forever if your proposals show no regard to its original character. **Plus it is very likely to affect the value of your property as potential buyers are now prepared to pay more for houses containing original features.**

This leaflet provides advice on choosing methods of repair and types of replacements which are in keeping with your house.

WHEN REPAIRS ARE NEEDED

Every house needs repairs occasionally and regular maintenance can save costly repairs later. When work is required it is important to carry it out using traditional materials, techniques and details to match those existing so that the property retains its character and contributes to the appearance of the street.

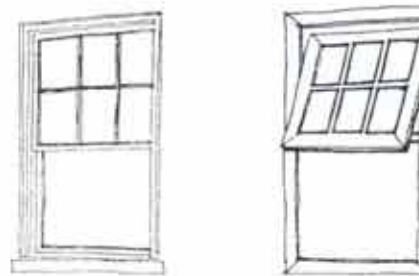
BEFORE YOU START

You may need Planning Permission or Building Regulation Approval for certain alterations to your house so check with the Planning Department before you start work. It is especially important to seek advice if you live in the Conservation Area and essential if you intend altering a listed building. Even if you do not need approval the Planning Department can give you advice on techniques and materials to suit your house.

WINDOWS

The design of the windows on a house is extremely important not only to the appearance of the house itself but also to the appearance of the street scene generally. Most of the original windows on the older houses in Felixstowe were timber vertical sliding sashes. These windows have a very strong vertical emphasis which visually balances the horizontal appearance of groups of buildings and the street as a whole.

If your windows need attention, explore the options available, as total replacement may not be necessary and in many cases simple repairs can be made at a relatively low cost. **If you are having problems with your existing windows remember advertisers put a lot of effort into trying to persuade you to buy their products and**



The crudely detailed plastic replacement window on the right bears little resemblance to the traditional quality of the original vertical sliding sash timber window alongside.

salesmen want to earn their commission so before ripping out your original windows think very carefully.

Windows which are just draughty, rattle, stick or let in excessive noise may only require a general overhaul. Both timber sash and casement windows can be improved by the addition of modern sealing systems, which will eliminate these problems. The refurbishment of existing timber windows can be undertaken by a carpenter/joiner, or by one of the specialist companies which now exist, **often at a fraction of the cost of total replacement.** In many cases the installation of secondary double glazing should be given serious consideration if further insulation against heat loss or noise is found to be necessary.

Windows with areas of rot may be able to be repaired rather than replaced, this involves cutting out the defective area and replacing it with a new piece of timber. If replacement of the whole window is necessary, note the proportions of the openings, how the window is set in the opening in relation to the face of the wall, the way in which it opens, the division of panes, the shape and size of timber sections making up the frame and the glazing bars. It is important these features are replicated if the architectural integrity of the house is to remain intact.

Modern replacements made out of plastic and metal can never match the detailing of traditional timber sliding sash windows. Those which claim to be of a traditional pattern and/or of a certain "classical" period are merely crude imitations. Sections are flat and wide, plastic strips are often stuck inside the sealed double glazed units and usually the windows end up having top hung opening lights.

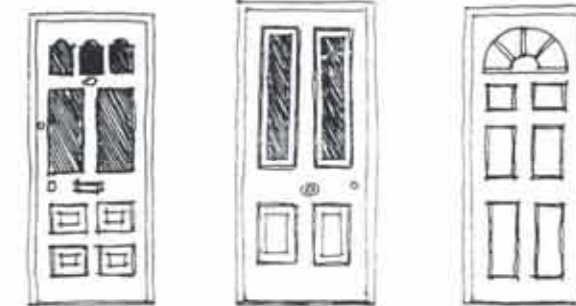
Plastic and metal windows are also not "maintenance free". Seals, catches and springs have a limited life. Repair can be difficult and sometimes impossible. Instead of using such windows by far the best option is to have new wooden ones made to match by a carpenter/joiner or by a firm which specialises in this sort of work. You may find that this is actually cheaper than fitting plastic or aluminium.

Do not change the shape or size of openings so that standard windows can be fitted as this will severely disrupt the original design of the house and will invariably involve the loss of the original decorative detailing on the window surrounds.

DOORS

The front door is almost always the focal point of any house. The original doors in older houses were generally panelled and painted. Many doors were half glazed, sometimes with vertical subdivisions, with etched or coloured leaded glass. Wherever possible try to retain the original door, having it repaired rather than replaced. If a replacement is unavoidable the best option would be to have a copy made of the original. Most carpenters/joiners are able to do this relatively easily.

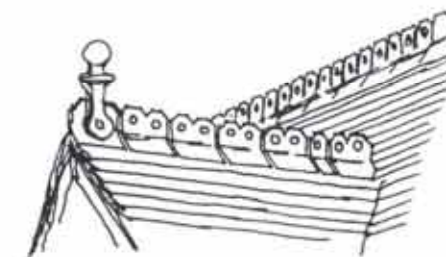
Care should be taken if an "off the shelf" replacement is used as many "period" doors such as those with the semi-circular glazed fanlight, are poor designs based very loosely on historical styles and as such are not really appropriate for Felixstowe's Victorian and Edwardian properties. If you have to choose a standard door then pick a timber door which is as close as possible to the style of the original, plastic or aluminium doors should be avoided.



Left and centre-two of Felixstowe's attractive original Victorian front doors. Right-modern replacements are a poor substitute.

ROOFS

The type of roof finish is very important in terms of the overall appearance of any house. In Felixstowe, the older properties had very attractive roofs, usually comprising natural slates or clay plain tiles often finished off with a variety of decorative ridge tiles.



Decorative Ridge Tiles

If your roof needs attention it is advisable to consult a professional surveyor rather than relying solely on the view of a roofing contractor. Problems with a roof are seldom due to the slates or tiles themselves failing, it is usually due either to slipped or missing tiles, rusting fixing nails or rotting battens. Sometimes it is the result of a lack of underfelt or the existing felt needs replacement.

When a roof has to be stripped often the majority of slates or tiles can be salvaged for reinstatement with any missing being made up with secondhand materials. Any decorative elements should be carefully removed and replaced upon completion.

If you have to replace the roof covering, large modern concrete tiles should be avoided because they change the appearance of the roof so much and look crude and heavy compared to slates or plain tiles. Also they are considerably heavier than slates and often heavier than clay tiles, so the roof structure and walls of the house may be adversely affected by the extra weight. The junction between different roof coverings on adjoining houses can be a further source of failure which would not arise if the original material was reused. If for any reason you have to change the roof finish you should choose a new material which resembles as closely as possible the shape, colour, and texture of the original covering.



Unsympathetic alterations to roof and chimney.

ORIGINAL FEATURES PRESERVED

This drawing illustrates some of the important features which make up a typical Victorian/Edwardian house and shows the effect of unsympathetic alterations.

UNSYMPATHETIC ALTERATIONS

