

Conservation and Adaption



Context

A Motion and Amendment approved by Planning Committee on 2 November 2022 requested that an online consultation be undertaken to seek views on the challenges for residents, who live in listed buildings and/or conservation areas, to adapt their homes in response to climate change and the cost-of-living crises. The analysis of the consultation responses were to be used to inform a short-life working group.

Conservation and Adaptation public consultation set out to understand the current challenges owners of historic properties face in maintaining and adapting their properties amid the climate emergency and cost-of-living crisis. The consultation was conducted as an online questionnaire survey and was open to responses from 31 March to 11 June 2023.



What Happened

The Conservation and Adaptation Consultation was hosted on the Council's Consultation Hub for 10 weeks between March and June 2023. Feedback from the consultation was used to inform discussions within the Conservation and Adaptation Short-Life Working Group, which was established to explore key issues. These discussions focused on the challenges of maintaining and adapting homes in conservation areas, the current support available, the long-term solutions needed, and the potential impact of changes on the city's built heritage.

Areas of Collaboration

Planning officers, elected members, community councils, resident associations University of Edinburgh and relevant bodies with an interest in the historic environment, energy saving and fuel poverty.

Overall Result

The distribution of property issues and barriers faced by owners differs significantly between flats and house-type properties (detached, semi-detached, and terraced homes). Flat owners experience a greater variety of property issues and face more barriers when maintaining and adapting their properties compared to house owners.

Key Findings:

Most Common Property Issues:

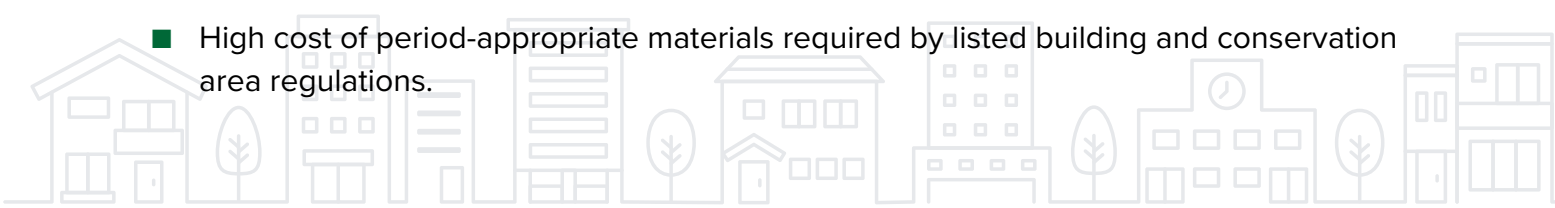
- Cold/draughts is the most frequently reported issue across all property types, followed by roof repairs.
- Flats experience significantly higher rates of condensation issues and failed gutters/downpipes compared to houses.

Primary Barriers to Maintenance and Adaptation:

- Financial cost is the most reported barrier, even among owners whose financial situation has remained stable or improved in the past year.
- Applying for permissions is the second most frequently cited barrier, disproportionately affecting flat owners.
- A higher proportion of flat owners struggle with securing agreement from neighbours for necessary works.

Additional Barriers Identified Through Respondent Comments:

- High cost of period-appropriate materials required by listed building and conservation area regulations.



- Lack of skilled and trustworthy tradespeople, making it difficult for owners to carry out necessary work.
- Absence of clear, centralised, and neutral guidance on selecting the most cost-effective renovation and adaptation measures.

Climate Change and Heritage Conservation:

- A significant majority of respondents (88%) view climate change as an immediate and urgent problem.
- Most respondents also consider preserving architectural character and historical significance to be very or extremely important.
- Comments suggest that balancing climate adaptation and heritage conservation is achievable if regulations were adjusted to reduce cost barriers and permit alternative energy sources or heating systems.

Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned is that property issues and barriers to maintenance and adaptation are not evenly distributed across different property types. Flat owners, on average, experience a greater variety of issues and encounter more obstacles than house owners. This highlights the need for targeted support and policy considerations to address the unique challenges faced by flat owners, particularly in relation to maintenance responsibilities, financial constraints, and regulatory hurdles.

