



# WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE ABF?



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# What is the role of the Architectes des Bâtiments de France?

If you own a property in an historic area, this guide about the ABF will help you understand their role

## 1. Who are the ABF?

The ABF is an organisation called the Architectes des Bâtiments de France. They are responsible for protecting and managing the architectural heritage of France; almost a cross between Historic England and local conservation officers.

## 2. Why is the ABF relevant in planning terms?

If you live in a protected zone – the centre of a historic village, or within 500m of a historic monument, church or cemetery or are fortunate to live in a historically important house the ABF will have their say when you want to change the appearance of your home. It could be as little as repainting a shutter or changing your front door but if your property qualifies under one of the above criteria the planning application will be sent to the ABF for their approval.

## 3. Where is the ABF located?

There are several of these based in the capital town of each department, at a Culture Ministry agency called Service territoriaux de l'architecture et du patrimoine (STAP).



#### 4. What are the main areas of interest for the ABF?

The ABF are primarily concerned with protecting the architectural heritage of France and so will become involved in any part of a project that falls under their jurisdiction. It could be that you own a plot of land close to a very small church; the ABF will be consulted when you submit your applications for a new house to make sure that the proposals do not harm the setting of the church. If you live in a house that is a listed structure, then the ABF will become involved in the small details and it is very important not to carry out work to any part of a listed building or structure without the express consent of the ABF.

#### 5. If we are thinking of purchasing a listed building or a property in an historic area, what should we do?

It's best to go into a property purchase with as much information as possible, therefore if you are thinking about purchasing a listed property or one in a protected zone and you feel that you would like to develop that property, then French Plans can provide a pre purchase planning appraisal of that property so that you can have some understanding of the possibly limitations or rules you would have to work within.

#### 6. How do I apply for a consultation with the ABF?

Generally it is best to send an email or call your local STAP or UDEP department to discuss the project, however more and more the workload of the ABF means that they will only consult or give advice/opinions when a planning application is submitted and sent to them for review.

## 7. Case study example - Cahors renovation project

As an example, French Plans recently obtained a successful planning permission for the conversion of a 900 year old building very close to the Cathedral in Cahors into a bar and restaurant. The city council were very keen for the regeneration of the building, but the building had a long history and a particular link with the Cathedral and its activities. There were certain details of the building fabric that the ABF wanted retained and also the façade was to be restored having been badly repaired in the late 1950's.

French Plans worked closely with the ABF to make sure that all of the elements that they required were accommodated whilst the building was also made accessible for disabled people and safe in respect of fire and evacuation. The ABF were supportive of the project as without regeneration the building would continue to degrade over time. It is important to remember that whilst the ABF can be seen as difficult to work with they are also key to protecting the beautiful architectural heritage of French towns and villages.



Would you like to know more?

If you are also looking to realise your own plans in France, whether it is a renovation, a new build, an extension or another project, residential or commercial – please get in touch.

# Contact information

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