

Applying for building regulations

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Introduction

If you're a homeowner and planning an extension or conversion, you may need a building regulations inspection as well as planning permission. Whereas planning permission is about how a building looks, building regulations make sure your home is structurally safe.

Getting building work approved by your local council's building control team helps ensure that the work is safe and up to building regulations standards as well as protecting you against rogue builders. So seek their advice before starting any building project.

Building control performance

The building control function in England and Wales works with property owners, developers, architects, contractors and trades people to ensure building work meets the standards set in the Building Regulations. Building Regulations set standards for the design and construction of buildings to ensure the safety and health for people, including those with disabilities in or about those buildings and to help conserve fuel and power.

To help people to comply with them the Government produces Approved Documents which offer guidance and show ways of achieving compliance. [Download these from the Submit-a-Plan website.](#)

You don't have to follow the exact guidance in most cases and an architect or architectural technician can often suggest other equally acceptable solutions which will be agreed with your building control surveyor.

What is covered in the Approved Documents?

Technical parts of building work are described in detail in a series of 'Approved Documents', which are published in documents from A to Q to match the building regulations requirements.

1. What is Building Control and how to the Building Regulations help you?

Are you thinking about carrying out building work at your property? There's plenty of information out there about how to improve your home and how to create a beautiful extension or a conversion. But there's not much practical guidance about the permissions that you need.

Once you've decided about what kind of project to carry out you'll probably need to find an architect or a designer to help you prepare plans and details. How much you have to spend will be a big factor in what you can achieve and professional guidance can save you a lot of money in the long run.

Once you find out whether you need planning permission and put in your application it's time to think about building regulations. The regulations sound very complicated and they are very technical but they're also very practical. You can download them for free from the .gov website and you can get a lot of free help and advice from your local building control team.

The Building Regulations are legal minimum standards and they don't necessarily ensure that the work's perfect. You still need experts. These are enforced by building control bodies. You can use approved inspectors or private building control firms but most people choose to use the expertise you find at your Local Authority Building Control or building inspectors department. They are there to protect you and your money from cowboy builders and unsafe practices, so talk to Building Control. [Find your local Building Control team on the Submit-a-Plan Authority Search Page.](#) You will need to be logged in to your free Submit-a-Plan account to access this page:

<https://www.submitaplan.com/applications/councilselect.aspx>

2. Do I need a Building Regulations Application?

Building regulations applications are needed for most construction projects:

New Buildings

- All new buildings except agricultural buildings
- Garages that are not fully detached and under 30 square metres

Extensions

- All extensions no matter how small
- Some conservatories and porches - many are exempt but these must be separated from the house by doors and can't be heated)
- Roof extensions, balconies and roof terraces
- Basements and basement extensions

Conversions

- All loft conversions, roof extensions, balconies and roof terraces
- All garage conversions

- Barn conversions
- Subdividing a house into flats
- Converting flats back into a house

Alterations

- Creating a 'granny annex'
- Creating a new or ensuite bathroom or cloakroom
- Installing a new kitchen
- Taking out a loadbearing wall – you need to ask a structural engineer to confirm that your wall isn't supporting the walls, floors or roof above it
- Taking out a non-loadbearing wall if it separates a room from your hall, staircase or landing
- New installation or replacement of a heating system or any boiler, regardless of fuel type
- New installation or replacement of an oil tank
- Installation of a new bathroom if existing plumbing is altered or if new plumbing is installed
- Installation of fixed air conditioning systems
- Installation of additional radiators to some existing heating systems
- Replacement fuse boxes, any new electrical installation connected to the fuse box and alterations to electrical installations in bathrooms around the bath or shower replacement window and door units
- Installing roof lights
- Making windows or doors wider or taller
- Replacement of roof coverings on pitched and flat roofs even if this is just like for like
- Replacing your floor

Some work can be carried out without informing Building Control if you're using a registered installer from a **competent persons scheme**, including the following:

- Most repairs, replacements and maintenance work (except replacements of combustion appliances, oil tanks, electrical fuse boxes or glazing units which do need to be notified)
- Additional power points or lighting points or any other alterations to existing circuits (except around baths and showers)
- Like for like replacements of baths, toilets, windows, basins or sinks.

3. What's the difference between planning permission and building regulations?

Building regulations set standards for the design and construction of buildings to ensure the safety and health for people in or about those buildings. They also include requirements to ensure that fuel and power is conserved and facilities are provided for people, including those with disabilities, to access and move around inside buildings.

Planning is interested in the way our towns, cities and countryside is developed. This includes the appearance of buildings, the use of land & landscaping considerations, highway access and the impact that the development will have on the general environment.

For many types of building work, separate permissions will be required for both. For other building work, such as internal alterations, buildings regulations approval will *probably* be needed, but planning permission *may not* be. If you are in any doubt, contact your **local planning authority and building control team**.

Many people get confused about these two permissions because you might need one or the other, both, or even neither, but you must find out before you start work. Planning permission or planning approval must be provided by your local council if your project meets the strict criteria.

You can get lots of free advice and information from your local council and their websites.

Planning permission is not usually required for most internal alterations, for some extensions, some loft conversions or some garages. Of course if your home is a listed building or is in a conservation area you'll probably need listed building consent, which is yet another type of legislation. So you should talk to the conservation officer at your local council and you'll probably need help from an architect.

Sometimes projects are classed as minor building works, known as permitted developments and they don't need planning permission. But some houses don't have permitted development rights. You should check with your local council before you start any work.

If you do need planning permission it will take at least two months, plus however long it takes to get the plans ready for submission. So you should allow enough time so it doesn't hold up your project.

Things that planning covers are location of the project, and the sighting, the height and size of the building, and the percentage of the plot that you want to build on. They look at local policies regarding the appearance, the materials, the colour of materials, the match of the bricks and tiles. You need to get all these things signed off by your local council before you build on site.

Things that planning doesn't cover include inspections, unless you deviate from the approved plan. They don't check how it's actually built, they don't look at the quality of the work, whether it's safe, or whether it will leak, or fall down or burn down.

That's why we have **Building Regulations**, so for building control and Building Regulations talk to your local authority building control team.

4. How to make a building regulations application?

What type of application do I need?

For domestic work there is a choice of application routes, Full Plans, Building Notice & Regularisation Application for retrospective works.

Full Plans

If you wish to have your plans checked and approved before the work starts, to avoid any costly errors and corrective work on site by not being fully up to speed with the ever changing regulations, it is recommend you apply using Full Plans form.

An application deposited under this procedure needs to contain plans and other information showing all construction details, preferably well in advance of when work is to start on site.

Your local authority will check your plans and consult any appropriate authorities.

If your plans comply with the Building Regulations you will receive a notice stating that they have been approved. If your local authority is not satisfied you may be asked to make amendments or provide more details. Alternatively, a conditional approval may be issued. This will either specify modifications which must be made to the plans; or will specify further plans which must be deposited with your authority.

If your plans are rejected the reasons will be stated in the notice. A full plans approval notice is valid for three years from the date of deposit of the plans

Building Notices

If the work is uncomplicated and you are happy that you or your builder has a reasonably good understanding of the regulations, then you can use a Building Notice form. The advantage of the building notice procedure is that detailed drawings are not formally required for approval, although some details such as structural calculations may be required. You may start work 48 hours after your notice has been received by the local authority.

Plans are not required with this process so it's quicker and less detailed than the full plans application. It is designed to enable some types of building work to get under way quickly; although it is perhaps best suited to small or basic work.

There are also specific exclusions in the regulations as to when building notices cannot be used in relation to domestic work, a Building Notice cannot be used:

- For work which will be built close to or over the top of rain water and foul drains shown on the 'map of sewers'
- Where a new building will front onto a private street

A 'building notice' is valid for three years from the date the notice was given to the local authority, after which it will automatically lapse if the building work has not commenced.

Retrospective Regularisation Applications

If the work has already recently started or possibly even been completed without proper consent, then a retrospective application can be made using a Regularisation form. You can even use this if the work was carried out by a former owner. Any work can potentially be regularised as long as it was carried out after the 11 November 1985

The purpose of the process is to regularise the unauthorised works and obtain a certificate of regularisation. Depending on the circumstances, exposure, removal and/or rectification of works may be necessary to establish compliance with the Building Regulations.

It's best to contact your local authority Building Control Service to discuss your individual circumstances before submitting a regularisation application.

How do I apply for approval through Submit-a-Plan?

If you think that your project will need approval you can apply to many local building control teams using the Submit-a-Plan Portal.

- Register for a free account on Submit-a-Plan <https://www.submitaplan.com/register/>
- Search for your local authority on our authority search page.
- Select the type of application you need from the list.
- Fill in the electronic online form.
- Submit electronically straight to the local authority for registration and checking.
- The authority will contact you for payment when they reach a certain stage in processing your application. Some authorities have application price lists on their council website's building control/regularisation pages. Otherwise you can send them an inquiry email from within your Submit-a-Plan account or from the authority contact page on the Submit-a-Plan authority search page. You can often pay using a card over the phone or via the council website secure payments system.
- In the majority of applications authorities will check and approve the plans before work starts.
- Whichever type of application you make authorities will come out and inspect the work at various stages giving advice and guidance to your builder and peace of mind for you. The stages they need to see will usually be agreed in advance.

If your local authority isn't subscribed to accepting full electronic applications through Submit-a-Plan yet you can still fill in your application form online using Submit-a-Plan but you would then need to email it or print and post it to them with any accompanying documents and plans.

When will my work be inspected?

The stages of inspection will usually be agreed in advance and might include:

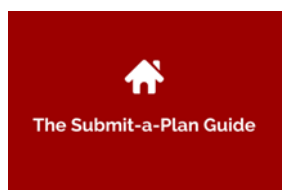
- **Commencement of work:** This stage is usually used to agree which future stages of work should be inspected. There may be something unusual, or a matter which you are not sure about, which can be discussed before the work gets too far.
- **Intermediate stages:** Different types of projects will require different inspections which might include foundations, the floor, damp proofing to walls and floors, the roof structure, any drainage, structural beams and openings, fire proofing and thermal insulation.
- **Completion:** The main purpose of this stage is to make sure the work meets the various Building Regulations before it is occupied and put into use. When the surveyor is happy with the work they will issue you with a completion certificate, free of charge. This is an important document used by solicitors/personal search agents when you come to sell the property and by mortgage lenders and property insurers.

Once you have started there is no time limit on finishing a project. Because you have chosen a local team they can normally carry out visits on the day you request them if you call before 10am – this is very helpful for your builder as it minimises costly delays.

For more information please contact your Local Authority Building Control department.

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For further information, guides, video tutorials please follow the links below to The Submit-a-Plan Guide.

<http://www.resolutiondm.com/submitaplanguide>

For support using Submit-a-Plan please contact us

sap_support@resolutiondm.com 01242 260505

For advice about building control applications please contact your local authority.



Resolution are the designers of Submit-a-Plan for Local Authorities