

Building Regulations Guidance Note: Controllable work

Work that requires building regulation approval

The following building works require a Building Regulation application and the Local Authority will need to inspect the work as construction progresses.

- Erecting and / or extending a building
- Underpinning of a building
- Conversion of a garage into a habitable area
- Conversion of a loft into a habitable area
- Alterations that will affect means of escape
- Alterations that will worsen disabled access
- Insertion of insulating material into a cavity wall
- Changing the energy status of a building or structure (see below)
- Renovation of thermal elements (see below)
- Re-roofing.

Carrying out a 'Change of Use' of certain buildings, including:

- When a building is used as a dwelling when previously it was not
- When a building contains a flat where it previously did not
- When a building which contains at least one dwelling, contains a greater or lesser number of dwellings than it did previously
- When a building is used as a hotel or institution when previously it was not
- When a building is used as a public building e.g. school, theatre, hall, church etc. when previously it was not
- When a building contains at least one room for residential purposes, contains a greater or lesser number of such rooms than it previously did
- When the building is used as a shop or restaurant, where previously it was not.

Other Works

A number of home improvement projects are also covered by the Building Regulations and the following few paragraphs set out to explain how the Building Regulations affect some of the projects that you may be considering.

Is an application required?

Building Regulations permission is required if you carry out a material alteration, other than those noted above. The following list is not exhaustive.

Enlarging openings and removing internal walls

Internal walls have a number of functions, some are fundamental to the structure of the property and some offer fire protection, specifically to stairway enclosures. Other internal walls merely divide up space within the property and could be non-loadbearing. These can be altered or removed with very few issues.

Enlarging openings and removal of load-bearing walls requires Building Regulation consent. A structural engineer should be commissioned to design the structural alteration. The engineer will consider what loads the wall is taking and will design a beam and if necessary, other supporting structure, to ensure that the loads the walls are carrying are safely transmitted to the ground. We will inspect the work as it progresses and then issue a completion certificate to show that the work complies with the Building Regulations.

The walls around your staircase offer you some protection to allow you to escape if a fire occurs. Removal of these walls also requires consent under the Building Regulations. If these walls are removed it is essential that your property is fitted with mains supplied smoke detectors on all levels and in certain instances, heat detectors in kitchens, if none exist. All detectors must interlink with each other and be provided with battery back-ups in accordance with the relevant British Standards.

Also required are means of escape windows to all habitable rooms (lounge, dining rooms, studies, bedrooms, etc.) to all levels of the property where no alternative exits exist. There should be at least one window serving each habitable room that has a clear opening of 0.33m² where the minimum dimension width or height is 450mm (the opposing clear measurement should therefore be a minimum of 734mm).

The above paragraph only applies to dwellings of up to 2 storeys. In other cases, you will need to seek advice from your local [Building Control Department](#).

Removing chimney breasts

If you intend to partially remove a chimney breast, the remaining structure will need to be supported. This can be carried out using steel beams or in some cases gallows brackets. The support must be designed by an appropriately qualified person such as a structural engineer and be based on a site survey. Please note that the Party Wall etc. Act 1996 may apply to this work.

Other structural alterations that require consent under the Building Regulations

- Trimming and infilling a suspended timber floor, such as installing a new straight flight or spiral stair where a conventional stair exists
- Installing rooflights in a pitched or flat roof where supporting joists/rafters need to be designed around the new openings
- Widening or providing new external or internal door and / or window openings in a structural wall where a completely new or longer beam / lintel is required
- Re-roofing
- Installation of solar panels on roofs

New drainage

Replacement kitchens and bathrooms do not generally need Building Regulation consent. However, where new drainage is installed to serve a new bathroom, ensuite, W/C, utility room or kitchen then consent is required. It is also required where waste plumbing is altered to accommodate relocated fittings.

New bathrooms, toilets, utility rooms, etc. also require mechanical ventilation. The rates of ventilation should be:

- Bath / shower rooms require 15 litres per second
- W/Cs require 6 litres per second
- Utility rooms require 30 litres per second
- Kitchens require 60 litres per second or 30 litres per second if installed within a cooker hood
- For windowless rooms, the extract fan should be set to a 15-minute overrun linked to the light.

Renovating thermal elements

Where a thermal element is renovated or replaced, an application should be submitted to the local Building Control section. Examples of renovating thermal elements:

- Cavity wall insulation
- Re-roofing (flat and pitched roofs)
- Rendering or re-rendering external walls (more than 50% wall area)
- Re-plastering internal walls (more than 50% wall area)

Renewable energy systems works' involving the installation of:

- Solar panels – photovoltaics
- Ground and air source heat pumps
- Solar panels - water heating

Change the energy status of a building or structure

Where a building or structure has its energy status changed, an application should be submitted to the local Building Control section. Examples of changing the energy status include:

- Extending the central heating system of a dwelling into a conservatory or porch
- Removing the thermal separation (external grade doors and windows) between a dwelling and a conservatory or porch.

If you're unsure whether the work you're doing requires a Building Regulations application, please [contact the Building Control team](#).