

Building Control Solutions

Homeowner Guide 9

Loft conversions



Loft Conversions

Need more space?

Making use of the space under the roof can be a cost effective way to create extra rooms without moving house. Roof space or attic conversions require a Building Regulation application where the intention is to provide:

- An extra bedroom
- A bathroom
- A playroom
- A study/office
- A floored storage area

Where the intended use is to store lightweight items such as suitcases, general household items etc., then the provision of loose boarding is generally satisfactory. An application would not be required in such circumstances provided the access to the area is by ladder and not by a new staircase. For the purposes of the Regulations a ladder is a flight with a pitch greater than 55°.

Ceiling joists are generally not intended to act as a floor and are not designed to support heavy loads. Therefore it is important to inform Building Control Solutions and make a Building Regulations application where the proposed use is for anything other than light storage. This leaflet highlights areas to consider to help ensure you get your loft conversion right first time.

Why inform Building Control Solutions?

They administer and enforce the Building Regulations, on behalf of the Council, to ensure buildings are constructed and altered to acceptable standards.

Where such works have been carried out without their knowledge and approval, future property sales could be jeopardised when solicitors acting on a purchaser's behalf, carry out conveyancing procedures.

Roof space conversions are generally considered to be a simple procedure. This is not the case. Many house owners underestimate the rules and regulations they need to follow. They should be designed and constructed by people aware of the health and safety aspects affecting building occupiers.

Building Control Solutions is there to help if you are in any doubt over the requirements or require further information.

Remember!

The Building Control Surveyor will require evidence of compliance with the Building Regulations in the following areas:

Fire Resistance

- Floors, certain walls and doors are required to resist fire for a specified period of time, usually 30 minutes in a typical domestic situation. The correct form of construction will protect you and your family and is essential to ensure safe escape in the event of fire or other emergency.

Means of Escape

- The new loft must be separated from the rest of the house by a fire door in a fire resistant partition, and a fire resisting floor.
- The new floor and room layout requires a safe and easy exit route in the event of fire.

- The provision of automatic smoke detection to give early warning of fire.
- The existing staircase enclosure will need to be upgraded to achieve a half hours fire resistance including the walls and doors.

IMPORTANT NOTE – If the loft conversion is to an existing two storey building; forming a three storey building when converted, means of escape and structural fire precautions must be provided. Both half hour fire resisting doors (FD20) to all habitable rooms and improved fire resistance to floors are required to be provided. Further advice on these matters can be obtained from the Building Control Team.

Structural Stability

- The structural adequacy of the existing foundations, new floor and support to the roof, has to be designed and checked to ensure it can safely support the new loads.

Electrical Safety

- Any alterations to the existing electrical circuits will need to be installed and checked by a qualified electrician.

Access

- You will need to consider the type of stair you would like.
- A traditional type will give safe and easy access.
- Other special types of stairs are available but only usable where space is restricted.

Ventilation

- Ventilation is essential to most room areas to prevent unpleasant living conditions.
- Condensation can affect areas that cannot be seen.

Certain roof space layouts and roof construction types require careful consideration of ventilation and vapour check barrier provisions.

Energy Conservation

- If a bathroom or shower room is to be included, additional ventilation measures will be required to prevent condensation.
- The walls and roof of the roof space conversion should keep heat in as well as keep the rain affects of damp out.

Smoke Alarms

SMOKE ALARMS ARE REQUIRED TO ALL LOFT CONVERSIONS

Buy wisely - Whichever type or make of smoke detector you choose, be sure that it complies with either the British Standard or ISO Standard. BS5446. If it is marked with the British Standard Kite Mark so much the better. Smoke alarms will be required at each storey level, inter-linked, and mains wired.

The functioning of all alarms and detectors, together with their power source should be periodically checked. A leaflet is available on smoke detectors in the home.

Remember

Do not start work until Building Control has approved your plans. Any work that does not comply will have to be put right, which can be extremely costly and difficult to do once work has already started.

Site Inspections

You will need to contact Building Control at various stages of the work. You and your builder should be clear who will do this. Our Site Inspection Homeowner Guide 17 gives further details on these stages.

Completion Certificate

You will require one once the work is complete. Please ensure this is carried out before the builder leaves site and before making the final payment. You should retain this for future reference if you sell the property. The sale of the property may be affected if this is not available.

How do I make an application?

A separate Guidance Leaflet is available either from our website or can be obtained from the Building Control Team.

How much will it cost to make an application?

A separate guidance leaflet on Building Control Charges is available either from our website or can be obtained from our Building Control Team.

Visit our website

For a wealth of information including application forms, guidance on charges and latest news why not visit our website at: www.bcsolutions.org.uk

Party Wall etc. Act 1996

Advice should be taken from a suitably qualified surveyor or legal expert on the possible implications of the above Act. Our Homeowner Guide 13 will give you an outline of the Act.

Other Approvals

In addition to Building Regulation approval, you may also require Planning Permission in certain circumstances. Please contact the relevant authority's Development Control Team for further advice.



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