

Building Control Solutions

Homeowner Guide 14

Replacement Windows, Rooflights and Doors



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I thought replacing windows did not need building regulation consent?

For many years, it has not been necessary to apply for Building Regulation consent when replacing windows in existing dwellings unless a structural alteration was involved. This usually only occurred when the existing opening was being made wider, which made the installation of a new support lintel necessary.

From the 1st April 2002 however, all owners replacing windows need to make an application, and

the new windows themselves have to fully meet the requirements of the Building Regulations. So even if you are replacing only one window with one brought from a local DIY centre you still need to follow the guidance below.

Please note references to windows also includes glazed doors and rooflights. A door should include more than 50% of it's area glazed.

What do I have to do?

You have a choice, you can either - 1. Use an installer registered with a Competent Persons Scheme (C.P.S). In this case you do not need to make a Building Regulations application to the Council. Your installer should then ensure your windows comply fully with the Regulations and will supply you with a certificate confirming this when the installation is complete.

If you wish to use this option please ensure that your installer is properly registered under the scheme before placing an order. You can check this and find more details of the scheme by visiting the relevant C.P.S Scheme website.

OR

1. Make a Building Regulations application, and in most cases the simplest way of doing this will be to submit a Building Notice. You must complete together with the appropriate charge at least two working days before removing the old window(s).

We can send you a copy of the form, or alternatively it can be downloaded from: www.bcsolutions.org.uk

Once we receive the Building Notice, a Building Control Surveyor will normally visit your property.

If all is found to be satisfactory, a Completion Certificate then will be issued to confirm this. You

may well be asked by your solicitor to produce this Certificate if you sell your property, so please follow carefully the guidance

How much will it cost?

If you use a contractor registered under one of the C.P.S Schemes, the cost should be built into the quotation for the works you are given. In all other cases the Council will make a charge for dealing with your Building Notice application.

What regulations do the windows have to comply with?

Thermal insulation

Since 1st October 2010 applications for replacement windows and doors have to achieve new improved thermal insulation standards. For windows (and doors with over 50% glazing) the following thermal specifications are required:

WER Band C (or better) or Whole unit U-value of 1.6W/m².K and for doors with less than 50% glazing: Whole door U-value of 1.8W/m².K

Please note that these values are very difficult to achieve and many double glazing units currently on sale will not meet these new standards.

Take great care when ordering new windows that your supplier can prove the glazing units used will satisfy this requirement, as the Building Control Surveyor will need to see this proof before issuing a completion certificate. We would particularly recommend that you leave any labels on the glazing in place until after a satisfactory inspection has been carried out by the Building Control Surveyor.

Means of escape

All first floor windows in dwellings should ideally have opening lights large enough to allow you to escape through them if you were trapped in the room by a fire. This also applies to rooms in bungalows which open into a hall (unless the hall itself has an external door through which you could escape).

To meet this requirement all such windows should have an unobstructed openable area of at least 0.33m² and be not less than 450mm high and 450mm wide (the route through the window may be at an angle rather than straight through). The bottom of the openable area should not be more than 1100mm above the floor.

If your existing windows do not have opening lights which meet the above requirements, we would strongly recommend for your own safety, that you take the opportunity to provide them in the replacement windows. This is not a however a requirement of the regulations, which simply state that the replacement windows must be no worse than those they replace in this respect.

Where the existing windows already have opening lights which are larger than the above requirements, those in the new windows can be reduced in size provided they are not reduced to less than the dimensions above.

Safety Glazing

Low level glazing (glazed areas within 800mm of floor level and glazing in doors within 1500mm of floor level should generally be of a type so that if broken, it will break safely. In practice this means such glazing should be either laminated or toughened.

Ordinary glazing can still be used in small pane sizes however, provided the glass is sufficiently strong to resist breakage. The Building Regulations gives maximum sizes according to the thickness of glass - for example, in a single pane less than 1.1m square - 8mm glass would be satisfactory.

Structural safety

If the replacement windows are wider than those they replace, or involve the replacement of bay windows, then the Building Control Surveyor will need to be satisfied that proper structural support is provided above the window. In older buildings, the timber frame of the window was often sufficiently strong to carry the load of a wall or roof above it without a lintel. Obviously in these cases either a lintel needs to be installed when the window is replaced, or the new frame carefully reinforced to carry the load.

Ventilation

The Building Regulations require that adequate ventilation is provided for people in the building and this should be considered when deciding on the size of opening lights in the replacement windows.

For most rooms, one or more opening windows totalling 5% of the floor area. Background “trickle” vents totalling 5000mm² for habitable rooms and 2500mm² for kitchens, utility rooms or bathrooms may also be considered. For kitchens, utility rooms and bathrooms an extract fan is also normally required. In some cases the existing windows may contain a permanent vent to supply combustion air to a heating appliance, although this is now rare.

If this is the case however you should ensure that either the replacement window contains a similar permanent vent, or that some other means of providing the required ventilation is installed at the same time.

Providing guidance

Please consult our Building Control team prior to making an application. Our service is there to help if you are in any doubts over requirements or require further information.

This is one of a number of Homeowner Guides to help you through the Building Control process. Copies are available either through our website or by contacting 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

Other Approvals

In addition to a 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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