

Roof Space Conversions

Roof space, loft or attic conversions require a Building Regulations application where the intention is to provide an additional room/s, for example:

- 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 to a small portion of the area 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 Building 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.

It is important, therefore, to inform the Building Control service and make an application for Building Regulations consent where the proposed use is for anything other than light storage.

Why Inform Building Control?

We administer and enforce the Building Regulations, on behalf of the Council, to ensure buildings are constructed and altered to the required standards. Carrying out works without approval is against the law and carries the risk of a fine. Also, future property sales may be jeopardised when solicitors acting on the purchaser's behalf carry out conveyancing procedures.

Roof space conversions are generally considered to be a simple procedure, this is not the case. These conversions need to be designed and constructed by people aware of the regulations and the health and safety aspects affecting building occupiers.

Things to Consider

The following is not a definitive list of things to consider when designing a roof space conversion, but highlights some of the more major issues that will require considering.

Structure

- The structural adequacy of the existing roof and any supporting walls has to be checked to ensure it can safely support the new loads placed upon it.
- The new floor and any support works needs to be designed to ensure it can safely support the new loads placed upon it.

Fire Safety

- The provision of an automatic smoke and/or heat detection system to give early warning of a fire.
- The new floor and room layout requires a safe and easy exit route in the event of fire. The provisions for escape need to be considered throughout the full extent of the escape route. Careful consideration of this item is of critical importance.

For example, a loft conversion to a two story house will result in the need to protect the stairway by providing fire resisting doors, walls and floors, where previously a reduced level or no protection may exist.

- New and existing floors, walls and doors are required to be structurally able to resist the effects of a fire for a specified period of time, usually 30 minutes in a typical domestic situation. Such provisions, among others, are essential to ensure safe escape in the event of a fire or other emergency.

Resistance to Moisture

- The walls and roof of the roof space conversion are required to keep out the rain and the effects of damp.
- Condensation, if not properly catered for, especially in areas where it cannot be seen, can cause problems. Certain roof space layouts and roof construction types require careful consideration of ventilation and vapour check barrier provisions.

Sound Insulation

- Internal separating walls and floors and any party wall or floor will be required to be acoustically insulated.

Ventilation

- Rapid and background ventilation is essential to most room areas to prevent unpleasant living conditions.
- If a bathroom or shower room is to be included, mechanical ventilation measures will be required to prevent the build up of excessive condensation.

Drainage

- If a bathroom or shower room is to be included, or any other appliance requiring drainage facilities, the method of achieving adequate drainage facilities will need to be considered.

Boilers and Flues

- Consideration will need to be given to the positioning of any new windows in relation to the positions of any existing or new combustion appliances and their flues.

Stairs & Protection from Falling

- The positioning of the stairs needs to be carefully considered to ensure that a compliant stair can be fitted with the required head room, landings, guarding and sited to meet the means of escape provisions.

Conservation of Fuel & Power

- The walls and roof of the roof space conversion are required to be thermally insulated to the current standard. In some cases where exposed floors exist these will also require insulating.

Safety Glazing - Part N

- Glazing in any window below 800mm, in or adjacent to a door, will need to be safety glass to BS:6206.

Electrical Safety - Part P

- The associated electrical installation works and its certification should be carried out by a suitably qualified, competent person, see our 'Electrical Safety' leaflet for more information.

PLEASE NOTE
Building work may require
other permissions including
Planning Permission.

For further information:

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Building Regulations 2000

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