

Roofspace Conversions Single Storey to Two Storey



Roofspace or attic conversions need a Building Regulation application where the intention is to provide:

- an extra bedroom.
- a bathroom.
- a playroom.
- a fixed stair to a roofspace store.
- a study/office.

If the conversion is to be used to store lightweight items such as suitcases and general household items, loose boarding is generally satisfactory. An application would not be needed in these circumstances if 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 degrees.

Ceiling joists are generally not intended to act as a floor, and are not designed to support heavy loads.

It is important to inform Building Control and to make a Building Regulations application if the proposed use is for anything other than light storage.

Why Inform Building Control?

The Building Control service administers and enforces the Building Regulations on behalf of the council. This is to ensure buildings are constructed and altered to acceptable standards. Works carried out without Building Control knowledge and approval could jeopardise future property sales. Roofspace conversions are generally considered to be a simple procedure, this is not the case. They should be designed and constructed by people aware of the health and safety aspects affecting building occupiers. The following points must be considered and catered for in roofspace conversions:

- Floors, certain walls and doors need to be structurally able to resist the effects of a fire for a specified period of time. This is usually modified half hour in a domestic situation. Such provisions, among others, are essential to ensure safe escape in the event of fire or other emergency.
- The new floor and room layout needs a safe and easy exit route in the event of fire. Careful consideration of this item is critical.
- An automatic smoke or heat detection system is needed to give early warning of a fire.
- Emergency egress windows are important aspects of fire safety in roofspace conversions. The size, and siting of at least one of these, should facilitate rescue by ladder from the ground.
- The structure of the "new floor" has to be designed and checked to ensure it can safely support the new loads placed upon it, without suffering collapse or excessive deflection.
- Alterations to the existing roof structure must be designed and checked to ensure that the structural stability of the roof is not affected. This is particularly important where trusses are to be altered. Trusses may not be altered without structural justification from a competent person.
- Ventilation of rooms is essential for good health and to prevent unpleasant living conditions.
- Condensation in roofs, if not properly catered for, can cause health problems, and lead to decay of roof timbers. Roofspace layout and roof construction needs to pay careful consideration to roof void ventilation and vapour check barrier provisions.
- The walls and roof of the roofspace conversion need to keep out the rain and effects of damp and reduce heat losses.
- If a bathroom or shower room is to be included, additional ventilation measures are needed to prevent excessive condensation.
- A conversion from 2-3 storey requires additional fire safety measures, which should be agreed with the local Building Control officer prior to commencing the work.

Note: Changes to the Building Regulations came into effect in October 2005; these now generally require that:

- **Each habitable room in a roofspace conversion should have an emergency egress window.**
- **Smoke alarms are installed to the circulation routes on each storey, with an additional smoke alarm being provided in the principal habitable room, and a heat detector to the kitchen.**

Other approvals

You may need planning permission as well as Building Regulation approval in certain circumstances.

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Further information can be obtained from your Building Control Officer. All views expressed in this document are those of the Council and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Finance and Personnel or any other Local Authority. In the event of any dispute arising, reference should be made to the relevant Statutory Document, which contains a full statement of the Law.