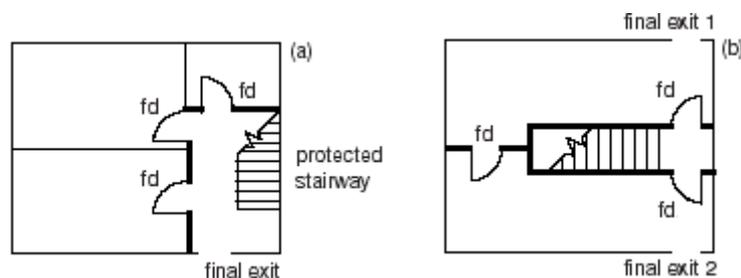


Roofspace Conversions Two Storey to Three Storey



To convert your existing loft into additional rooms then you will need to apply for Building Control Approval. You may also need Planning Permission if you are installing a dormer window, and/or live in a conservation area or a Listed Building. This guidance note deals with the points, which most often cause difficulties for applicants. **If you cannot find ways of dealing with them, it may not be possible to convert your roofspace at all.** Please remember that this guidance note only applies to existing two storey houses where the new storey has a floor area of less than 50 square meters, and does not create more than two habitable rooms.

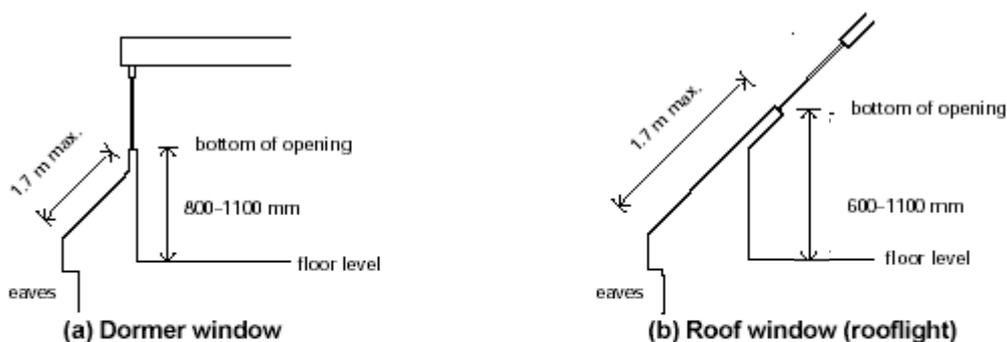
1. Does your staircase discharge to an external door? At ground floor level the stairs must come down into a hall served by an external door, or there must be at least two separate escape routes available to an external door separated by fire resistant construction. **If you have an open plan staircase it will therefore need to be enclosed.** The diagram opposite illustrates what is required but see note (2) overleaf about existing doors.



Note: where the stair discharges directly to a final exit existing doors may be retained.

— 30 minute fire-resisting construction

2. Can you provide suitable escape windows from the new second floor? All loft conversions require a window accessible by a ladder, through which you could escape if the stairway became unusable. All habitable rooms must have windows which have a minimum clear opening of 0.33m^2 , AND no less than 450mm high or 450mm wide (refer to Escape window guidance leaflet for more information) AND it should not be more than 1700mm up from the eaves if situated in the roof. It is not uncommon for the existing roof purlins to be in the way of this escape window and may require re-positioning for which you will require specialist structural advice.



Notes

- (1) Clear window opening not less than 0.33m^2 in area and at least 450 mm high and at least 450 mm wide.
- (2) Window located to facilitate rescue by ladder from the ground.
- (3) The window may be in the end wall of the dwellinghouse instead of the roof as shown.

3. Can you achieve enough headroom over the new stairs and landings? Headroom should be at least 2 metres above the pitch line of the flights and landings.

4. Automatic smoke detection and alarms. Mains powered smoke alarms must be installed on each storey, and the alarms must be linked together so that all sound even if only one is triggered. A smoke alarm must be placed within 3m of the door to every bedroom, and within 7.5m from the door of any other habitable room. An additional smoke detector should be provided in the principal living room, and a heat detector in the kitchen. Smoke alarms should have a battery backup, and be connected to mains power, which can be supplied by a regularly used lighting circuit. See our guidance note for additional information on Smoke & Heat Detectors.

General Considerations

1. Modern houses with trussed rafter roofs are usually unsuitable for loft conversions, as the inner members of the truss cannot normally be removed. While a structural engineer may be able to design a scheme to make this possible it is likely to be expensive.
2. The existing ceiling joists in the roof will almost certainly be inadequate for use as floor joists. In most cases it is possible to install new floor joists and support beams between the existing ceiling joists to maximise the headroom available.
3. To ensure that the stairway will normally remain available as a route of escape in the event of a fire, the existing stair at ground and first floor level must be enclosed in fire resisting construction (e.g. plasterboard on timber studs, or blockwork). The route must lead to an external door at the foot of the stairs or a choice must be available to pass through one of two separate rooms to an external door. This is required so that if a fire occurred in one of the rooms, escape would always be possible through the other.
4. All **existing** doors need not be replaced with fire doors, but all **new** doors, to habitable rooms on the escape route, must be FD20 fire doors. **All** doors must be fitted with a self-closing device and any glazing must be fire resisting. Georgian wired safety glass is usually acceptable in these situations.
5. Any glazing in partitions between a habitable room and the escape route must also be 1/2hour fire resisting.
6. The basic requirement for fire separation is to surround the new rooms in such a way that if a fire did occur below, the occupants would be protected from its effects for 30 minutes. To achieve this the new stair has to continue up in the existing stair enclosure (in which case the fire door and separating structure will be at the top). Alternatively it can be enclosed in a fire protecting structure from first floor level upwards (in which case the fire door will normally open off the first floor landing).
7. The floor to the new rooms must have a 30-minute fire resistance over any part of the escape route directly below or above. This is often the case when, for example, the floor of the new room extends over a landing in the stairway enclosure below. Where the floor is only over other rooms a 'modified' 30-minute standard of fire resistance is required which is much easier to achieve.
8. Escape windows (see overleaf for details of size and position) must normally be provided in each of the new habitable rooms. The only exception to this occurs in a two-room loft conversion, where a window in only one of the two rooms is acceptable provided each has a separate doorway onto the stairway enclosure, and there is a separate communicating door between the two rooms. It is important that there is access and space available at ground level to allow the escape windows to be reached by a ladder; extensions or conservatories can often make this difficult.
9. Staircases providing access to the loft conversion, in addition to having the previously described headroom provisions must also be designed to provide safe access. The design of which often will take up a considerable amount of floor space in the highest part of the roof space. Couple this together with the fire enclosures required above, the usable floor area can often be a disappointment to the end user.
10. The new rooms will need to be surrounded by insulation to prevent excessive heat loss. While there are many ways of achieving this, we would recommend that you check your chosen method with your Building Control Officer before any insulation is installed. Be advised that the provision of this insulation will often reduce the headroom to the existing loft space.
11. There are other areas where the Building Regulations impose requirements relating to roofspace conversions, but if you can deal with the points raised in this document, you will be well on your way to getting approval.

You are however STRONGLY advised due to the complex nature of these types of application that you make a full plans application. This way the majority of the potential difficulties can be resolved before work on site commences.

Other approvals

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

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