

Planning and Transport

Are you thinking of converting that unused attic space to extend your home?

If you only intend to use the attic space to store light items such as suitcases and Christmas decorations then providing loose boarding is generally satisfactory. You must remember that the ceiling joists are only intended to act as a fixing for the ceiling below and are not designed for heavy loads. It is important to prevent any overloading of the ceiling joists and for any use other than light storage you will need to tell us.

Why do you need to tell us?

We are responsible for the enforcement of the Building Regulations. The purpose of the Building Regulations is to make sure that buildings are altered and constructed to reasonable health and safety standards. If you have any building work done you have an obligation to comply with the law. If you construct a loft conversion without obtaining approval you will experience difficulties when you come to sell the house. Unauthorised loft conversions come to light when houses are being sold and obtaining approval at this later stage will mean that you have to open up parts of the work for inspection. You will also have to provide all necessary structural design details to prove the work meets relevant regulations and either remove the conversion, or carry out any remedial works necessary to bring it up to standard.

The following are examples of matters that you and your builder must take account of when planning a loft conversion. We advise that you consult an architect, surveyor or structural engineer prior to seeking approval from us.

Structural stability

If the space is for other than light storage a new floor will have to be provided. Any alterations to the roof structure to form roof lights or dormer windows need careful consideration so that they do not adversely affect the overall stability of the roof.

Access and means of escape

To gain access to your new room you will have to consider the type of stair you would like. Ideally you should provide a traditional type that will give safe and easy access. Other special types of stair are available and may be considered only where space is restricted. Adequate headroom must always be provided.

Remember! Stairways should provide a safe escape route for you and your family in the event of a fire. This is particularly important when a new room is formed in the roof space of an existing two storey house. You will be effectively creating a three story dwelling and as such all doors opening on to the stairway (except doors to a bathroom) must be adequately fire resisting (FD20). To be effective in protecting your family these doors should be closed at night.

Building Control Guidance Leaflet 8

Hopefully your home already has smoke alarms, adding a loft conversion will mean that additional alarms will be required. These must be to an appropriate standard, mains wired and interlinked to alarms on each floor level. Guidance Leaflet 6 provides more information on smoke alarms.

Fire resistance

The Building Regulations require that floors and certain walls and doors resist fire for a specified period. The correct form of construction will protect you and your family. You should make sure that this fire protection is adequately maintained. Fire resisting doors should not be replaced with decorative non fire resisting doors and you should make sure that all fire resisting doors are closed at night.

Weather resistance and energy conservation

In addition to keeping out the elements, the walls and roof of the loft conversion should also keep in the heat. They have to be constructed of materials that reduce heat loss and, of course, this can help to reduce your heating costs.

Ventilation

In order to prevent unhealthy living conditions, ventilation has to be provided. Condensation can affect areas that cannot be seen, such as roof spaces, where it can cause serious problems. Ventilation of these spaces is vital.

How and when do you need to tell us?

Remember, we are here to give advice. The Building Control surveyor responsible for your area will be pleased to advise you on the procedures to follow.

Further details of how to make an application and our inspection procedure are contained in Guidance leaflets 1 and 2.

Building Regulations approval does not imply approval under the Town and Country Planning Act. You should always check if a separate planning application is required.

This leaflet provides advice on a particular aspect of the Building Regulations. It is not a statement of law, but is intended to help you to understand the system.

Building Regulations change from time to time. If you did not receive this leaflet directly from Wigan Council Building Control, please check that the information is still current.

We are here to help. If you are in any doubt over the requirements of the Building Regulations, or if you need further information, please telephone or write to us at:

Postal address: Wigan Council, Places Directorate, PO Box 100, Wigan, WN1 3DS.

E-mail: planningrepresentations@wigan.gov.uk

Telephone: 01942 404364

Website: www.wigan.gov.uk,
