



## Surrey Building Control Guidance Note - Number 17



### Loft Conversions

Loft conversions can be a useful way of adding an extra room to your house. The notes below are for domestic properties only. Please contact us if you are planning to carry out this work in a commercial property.

You will need to consider the following:

#### **Building Regulations**

You will need to obtain Building Regulation consent for all work that involves creating a room in an existing roofspace.

You can apply for consent by using the Full Plans or Building Notice procedures. Please note that the Building Notice procedure is not recommended, as work is complex. Agreed plans and other information can be valuable when carrying out a loft conversion.

**Building Regulations do not apply if you are only boarding the ceiling and access is by a loft ladder. Walls and linings should not be provided and the space should be used for the storage of goods and materials etc and not as a room. You should not overload the ceiling with excessive weight. Limited services such as a light are acceptable.**

#### **What work is involved when carrying out a loft conversion?**

The existing roof structure needs to be carefully examined and the following considered:

- A new floor will be required. Existing ceiling joists and binders are not designed to carry floor loads. This will involve inserting floor joists and supporting beams. Support to the existing ceiling will need maintaining.
- How the new floor will be supported. Do you have loadbearing walls that can carry the new floor joists and supporting beams? Will you be putting extra weight onto existing supporting beams at a lower level? Can they carry this extra weight?
- You may need to increase the strength of the existing rafters and purlins. They need to carry extra weight from plasterboard linings etc.
- If you are installing a dormer window or rooflight you will need to consider how you support the existing roof where rafters and purlins are cut.
- Does the roofspace provide enough headroom for the room and staircase? The new floor will reduce available height.
- Do you have enough room to install a staircase up to the new room? Loft ladders are not suitable.

- Can you make the room safe in the event of a fire? You will need to:
  - Provide, either,
    - An enclosed staircase, containing no rooms, from the new room to the outside of the building, or
    - An enclosed staircase, containing no rooms, from the new room to the ground floor. Once the ground floor is reached you should then have a choice of two fire separated routes to the outside of the building.
  - Separate the new room from the rest of the building with fire resisting construction. This will involve the existing ceiling, new staircase enclosure and any new doors.
  - All doors surrounding the staircase enclosure must be fire resisting doors but self closing devices are not required.
  - Provide mains operated interconnected smoke alarms at all levels within the building.
- Is the existing roof weathertight? Repairs may be needed.
- Can you insulate the structure, including party walls to prevent heat loss?
- Can you ventilate the rooms and roof voids?
- Can you insulate the structure, including floor, party walls and ashlar walls against sound transmission?
- Does the existing party wall require any work? You may have to build it full height for structural, fire, sound and heat loss reasons. You may need to give notice to your neighbour under the Party Wall Act 1996.

### **Planning Permission**

You do not normally need to apply for planning permission to convert your loft or to insert roof lights or skylights.

However, there are some special rules, which govern extensions to the roof.

You will need to apply for planning permission if you live in a **Conservation Area or a Listed Building** and you want to build an extension to the roof of your house or any kind of addition which would materially alter the shape of the roof.

Outside those areas, you need to apply for planning permission if any of the following is true.

- The work would make some part of the house higher than the highest part of the existing roof.
- The dormer or other addition you want to build would extend beyond the plane of any existing roof slope facing a highway.
- A roof extension would add more than 40 cubic metres to the volume of a terraced house or more than 50 cubic metres to any other kind of house.

Note: additional volume created by an extension - and that includes roof extensions - will count against the total volume limit for your house. So you will also need to apply for planning permission before building a roof extension if:

- For a **terraced house** the volume of the "original house" would be increased by more than 10% or 50 cubic metres (whichever is greater).
- For **any other kind of house**, the volume of the "original house" would be increased by more than 15% or 70 cubic metres (whichever is greater).
- The volume of the "original house" would be increased by more than 115 cubic metres.

**Further information on the work involved in carrying out a loft conversion can be found in our guidance note 18.**

**Please note that these guidance notes are for advice only and may not cover all situations. It is your responsibility to ensure that they are appropriate for use in your particular circumstance.**