

# Building Improvement Guide

## Do I need to apply for Building Regulation approval?

You must apply for Building Regulations approval if you want to:

- construct a building such as a new home, office, shop and so on.
- make structural alterations to a building, for example, remove a load-bearing wall or a chimney breast.
- build an extension on an existing building, for example, building a kitchen extension.
- convert a roofspace to be used as storage or an extra room.
- install fittings or services in a building, for example, installing or converting a central-heating system, installing a heating appliance, flue, unvented hot-water system or micro generation technology.
- install a solar panel or other renewable-energy technology.
- alter or install drainage or provide new sanitary accommodation such as a toilet or bathroom.
- make material change of use to a building, for example, convert offices into flats.
- provide access ramps and other facilities for people with disabilities.
- install cavity-wall insulation or roof-space insulation.

## What are the Building Regulations?

The Building Regulations set performance standards for the design and construction of buildings.

They are arranged in 15 parts:

- Part A: Interpretation and general
- Part B: Materials and workmanship
- Part C: Site preparation and resistance to contaminants and moisture
- Part D: Structure
- Part E: Fire safety
- Part F: Conservation of fuel and power
- Part G: Resistance to the passage of sound
- Part H: Stairs, ramps, guarding and protection from impact
- Part J: Solid waste in buildings
- Part K: Ventilation
- Part L: Combustion appliances and fuel storage systems
- Part N: Drainage
- Part P: Sanitary appliances, unvented hot water storage systems and reducing the risk of scalding
- Part R: Access to and the use of buildings
- Part V: Glazing

Parts B to V refer to technical booklets which give guidance. In most cases, if you follow these booklets, your building will meet the Building Regulations.

## Planning permission

Planning permission may be required for extensions and other works. For more information you should contact the Planning Service on **0300 200 7830** or visit the [Planning NI website](#).

## **Exemptions**

You may not need to make an application for some works but they will still need to meet the Building Regulations standards, and you must make sure the builder or installer constructs them correctly.

### **Conservatories**

A room is defined as a conservatory if more than three-quarters of its roof area and more than one-half of its external walls are made of translucent material such as glass. Conservatories do not need an application if the:

- floor area less than 30m<sup>2</sup>
- area is separated from main building by exterior quality doors to retain the thermal performance of the building
- construction gives resistance to moisture and other ground contaminants that may be required by Part C of the Building Regulations
- safety glazing is used if needed (Part V of the Building Regulations), and
- heating is not extended into it and a fixed heating appliance is not installed.

### **Porches**

A porch must have a door into the building and an external door out of it. Porches do not need an application if the:

- floor area less than 5m<sup>2</sup>
- construction provides resistance to moisture and other ground contaminants that may be required by Part C of the Building Regulations
- safety glazing is used if needed (Part V of the Building Regulations), and
- heating is not extended into it and a fixed heating appliance is not installed.

### **Domestic greenhouse**

Domestic greenhouses are exempt.

### **Carport**

- If it is open on at least 2 sides and has a floor area of less than 30m<sup>2</sup>
- Covered area or covered way with a floor area less than 30m<sup>2</sup>
- Detached single storey building with a floor area up to 15m<sup>2</sup>, not used for sleeping and which is at least 1m from a dwelling
- Detached single storey building (such as a domestic garage) with a floor area up to 30m<sup>2</sup>, not used for sleeping and is either 1m or more from any dwelling or boundary, or else constructed substantially from non-combustible materials (such as with brick walls and a tiled roof).

### **What happens if I don't get building control approval?**

Carrying out building work without building control approval could result in one or all of the following:

- Enforcement action against you – you will have to make the appropriate application and may face court proceedings and fines.
- Extra costs – you may have to pay another builder to make alterations or in the worst case, you may have to remove the works you have done.
- Hold-ups to your plans – you may not be able to sell or re-mortgage your home. Please visit the [Department of Finance website](#) for more information on building regulations.