

A Simple Guide to Domestic Loft Conversions

Introduction

Loft conversions are a popular way to create additional space within the roof area. This information is intended to provide guidance on the requirements of the Building Regulations. Whether you intend to construct a dormer or build within the existing roof space, you will need to show how your proposals comply with the requirements. This usually means preparing drawings supported, where necessary, with structural calculations.

The Requirements

Structural stability

- The conversion will usually require steel or timber beams to support the new floor and walls.
- The existing rafters, walls, lintels and foundations need to be verified as adequate to take new loads.
- You may need to seek advice of a competent person to justify the proposed structure.

Fire Safety

Where your house becomes three or more storey, you will need to comply with the following requirements (a reduced standard applies to bungalows).

- The new and existing rooms must have a fire door to separate it from the stairwell. (except bathroom/wc).
- Any internal glazing in the stair enclosure must be fire resisting.
- The new floor is required to achieve 30 minutes fire resistance.
- The ceilings below landings are required to achieve 30 minutes fire resistance.
- A mains operated smoke detector should be installed to each floor (hallway, landing and within the new room in the roof-space) and these should be interconnected.

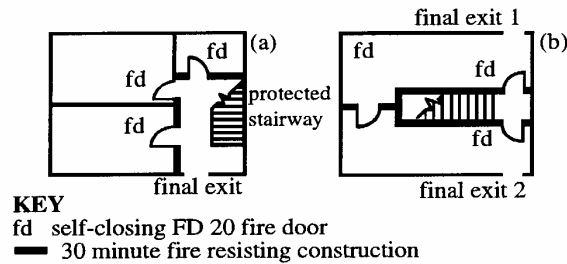
Thermal and Sound Insulation

- The underside of the roof must be thermally insulated whilst ensuring that the roof structure above the insulation is ventilated.
- The floor of the loft not only needs to be insulated against fire, but must also be insulated to reduce sound transmission.

Staircase to habitable rooms

- A retractable loft ladder is NOT acceptable.
- The new staircase should be either:
 - A standard staircase;
 - A spiral staircase;
 - An alternating tread staircase (see next note);
 - A fixed ladder (see next note).
- Alternating tread stairs and fixed ladders are only acceptable where there is not enough space for either a standard or spiral staircase.

- A 2000mm headroom is required to the new staircase. Slight reductions are allowed where the roof slope obstructs the headroom on one side of the staircase.
- Handrail and guarding must be provided together with landings to the top and bottom of the staircase.
- Two way light switching should be provided.
- In some cases the internal layout may need to be altered to provide a suitable means of escape.



Lofts used as storage areas

- Some lofts are converted to provide storage areas assuming that no permission is required. If the storage area is capable of being used for living purposes or increases the loading on the roof or loft floor, then Building Regulations consent may be required. In such cases, and before you carry out the work, please check with us.

General Advice

- Some lofts are already converted by previous occupants without the benefit of permission. Contact us for advice in such cases.
- You are advised to seek professional advice with regard to the design of loft conversions due to the complex nature of their design.
- At the start of the work we should be notified so that an early inspection be made of the work. We need to inspect the work and where problems are encountered offer advice.
- In some cases Planning Permission may be required, although this is usually only the case if a dormer window is to be constructed.

Planning Permission Requirements;

Please contact the planning office for advice as each case is different.

Email: Southeast.Planning@northumberland.gov.uk

or telephone: **0845 600 6400**