



Outlook  
Loft  
Conversions

## Feasibility Assessment

Any loft conversion will have to be designed with the following features: -

- The existing trusses will have to be removed and replaced with steel beams spanning across the house between the party and flank walls. These beams will replace the existing ridge beam and purlins.
- A new floor structure will be required to support the loft floor. This would comprise steel beams spanning across the house between the party/flank walls to support new timber floor joists spanning from front to back. This new structure is usually installed above the existing ceilings, leaving them intact. Alternatively, the existing ceilings could be removed and the new floor structure placed lower, in the same plane as the existing ceiling. The former creates much less disruption as the work is carried out above the existing ceiling. However the latter will create more space in the loft conversion.

In addition to the modifications required to the existing roof structure, it is often necessary to install a dormer at the back of the house in order to maximize the usable headroom. A structural engineer will be required to design the structure for the new conversion, and any modifications to the existing building.

## Access

Access to the new loft rooms will be via an extension to the existing stairs, directly above the existing staircase - usually without altering the existing first floor accommodation.

## Fire Regulations

Fire regulations are divided into two parts, escape for the occupants and protection of the building structure.

Escape for the occupants will be via the staircase and out through the front door. This route must be protected from a fire breaking out in any of the rooms on the other floors. The doors between those rooms and the stairway must have a degree of fire resistance (30 minutes), and the circulation areas must have mains operated and interlinked smoke detectors installed.

There is also a requirement for an emergency escape via a window from a loft conversion. This can be provided either by a specially designed roof window or a suitable window in a dormer.

Protection of the building structure can be provided by normal building practice and just requires correct detailed design of the building works.

## Planning approval (Permissible Development)

Any works, which extend the volume of the existing building, may require planning approval from the local authority.

However, some works are covered by "permitted development". These generally include small extensions to the rear of the property and some dormers for loft conversions.

Permitted Development Rights do not apply to listed buildings or a building situated within a conservation area - a formal check is required to confirm this.

Local authorities in certain cases can also suspend Permitted Development Rights. Again, a formal check will be required to determine if the local authority has done this.

If the proposal does fall within "Permitted Development" then we recommend an application for a "Certificate of Lawful Development" (LDC) that will confirm this, both for your peace of mind and also to ease any future sale of the house.



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## Planning Approval

If planning consent is required then an application will have to be lodged with the local authority, and the timescale for them to determine the application is a maximum of 8 weeks. The application will include plans and elevations of the existing house plus plans, elevations, sections and specifications sufficient to explain the proposed works.

## Building Regulations Approval

Building regulations approval will definitely be required for the proposed work.

Building regulations approval can be sought in two ways: -

### 1. Full Plans Application

This is a two-stage application.

Stage one: During the design process, plans are submitted to the local authority that grants an approval based on those plans.

Stage two: Just prior to work commencing on site, notice is sent to the local building control office and an inspector will visit site to inspect the works at key stages.

### 2. Building Notice

This is a single stage application where the builder will submit a “building notice” to the local authority just prior to commencement of works on site. The local building inspector will visit site as stage 2 above. This is only appropriate for smaller jobs.

Both applications routes incur the same fee and we recommend the former method.

A member of the “Competent Persons Scheme” will undertake electrical work (Part P Regulations) and a “Gas Safe” registered plumber will undertake gas works. These tradesmen are authorised to certify their work.