

30 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BUILDING REGULATIONS FOR DWELLINGS

WHAT ARE BUILDING REGULATIONS?

01

UK Building Regulations set out 'minimum requirements' with which building construction must comply regarding the health and safety of people in buildings, saving energy, access to buildings for everyone and water conservation. In other words, the Regulations are there to make sure that buildings don't easily collapse, burn down, waste energy and are generally fit for purpose. It is the responsibility of the owner, architect and builder to meet the requirements. The government provides guidance in a series of Approved Documents from A-P. The guidance varies depending on whether the building project is domestic or commercial and on whether it is a new build, renovation or extension. The process of applying the Building Regulations is known as Building Control.

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HOW DOES THE BUILDING CONTROL PROCESS WORK?

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The building owner, architect or builder registers the project with either the Local Authority or with an Approved Inspector such as jhai. The appointed Building Control Body will then check the plans and make site visits to assist the client in achieving compliance with the Building Regulations. When the work is complete the client receives a Certificate of Compliance.

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03

SO I CAN USE AN APPROVED INSPECTOR INSTEAD OF THE COUNCIL FOR BUILDING CONTROL?

Yes! The Construction Industry Council, on behalf of the Government, carries out a rigorous licensing process for Approved Inspectors such as jhai to ensure their technical excellence and organisational capability. jhai approves thousands of projects every year, from small domestic extensions to the largest commercial developments. We also provide expert training for professional bodies such as RIBA and RICS. We pride ourselves on a friendly, helpful service making sure that you end up with the building you want with full Building Regulations approval.

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WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU NEED?

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To register the project we just need an address, a site plan and a description of the work. We will need more detailed drawings, specifications and calculations to approve the project.

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Jhai Ltd has given the answers to the questions below in good faith and believes them to be correct at the time of going to press. However, always check with your Building Control Surveyor before proceeding on the basis of the information provided here as individual site conditions, construction methods and other factors may determine the most appropriate solution.

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DO I NEED BUILDING CONTROL FOR REPLACEMENT WINDOWS?

Yes, but if you use a FENSA registered installer they may not need to apply; they can self-certify the works. We will be happy to help.

06

CAN YOU GIVE PARTY WALL ADVICE?

No. You will need a specialist surveyor to give advice on the Party Wall Act. We will advise on any Building Regulations aspects of party walls or floors.

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WHAT DOES BUILDING CONTROL HAVE TO DO WITH PLANNING?

Not a lot. Planning occurs at an earlier stage and is the process whereby the Local Authority assesses the visual and environmental suitability of a project. Problems can occur later if Planners approve external features that do not comply with Building Regulations.

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CAN I START WORK ON MY PROJECT BEFORE CALLING YOU?

No. We need to log your project on a public register. This process takes five days to complete.

- Demolition and site clearance are not controlled under the Regulations.

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CAN YOU RECOMMEND A BUILDER?

No. We have to remain independent but we will work with your chosen builder to ensure compliance.

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DO I NEED BUILDING CONTROL FOR A CONSERVATORY?

Only if one or more of the following applies:

- it does not have a substantially glazed roof
- it does not have substantially glazed walls
- it is over 30m² in floor area
- it is not at ground floor level
- it is not separated from the dwelling by a pair of external quality doors.
- it is in a commercial property
- The building's heating system is extended into the conservatory.

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I HAVE A MATURE TREE NEAR WHERE I WANT TO BUILD. IS THIS A PROBLEM?

Depending on the type of tree and whether it is shrinkable soil, you may have to excavate deeper for the foundations, and you may need additional precautions if you decide to remove the tree.

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I'M REFURBISHING MY PROPERTY BUT WILL NOT BE MAKING ANY STRUCTURAL CHANGES OR CHANGING THE LAYOUT. DO I STILL NEED BUILDING REGS APPROVAL?

If you need to remove and replace internal plaster, ceiling linings (beneath the roof) or provide new external cladding to the walls you may need to allow for providing additional insulation. Always check with us first.

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CAN I HAVE AN OPEN PLAN LAYOUT IN MY HOUSE OR FLAT?

Yes, but you need to make sure that adequate means of escape can be achieved in a fire.

We can help you plan for the use of alternative exits, protected stairs, smoke curtains or sprinklers to achieve compliance.

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CAN I HAVE GLAZED WALLS WITHIN MY HOME?

Yes, but they need to be safety glass and, depending on where they are located, they may also need to be fire rated.

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CAN I HAVE AN OPEN RISE STAIRCASE?

Yes, but the open space between each step should be less than 100mm to ensure the safety of young children in the building.

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CAN I HAVE STAIRS OR A MEZZANINE LEVEL WITHOUT A HANDRAIL OR BALUSTRADE?

No. You must provide protection from falls over 600mm high in dwellings. This can be achieved in a number of ways which are sympathetic with the design of the interior, perhaps using glass.



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I WOULD LIKE TO CREATE A SMALL OFFICE ROOM WITHIN A ROOM IN MY HOUSE.

There are requirements for means of escape in case of fire which will determine whether you are able to have a room within another room.

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I'M DOING A LOFT CONVERSION BUT I'VE BEEN TOLD I HAVE TO REPLACE ALL MY ORIGINAL DOORS. IS THERE ANY WAY I COULD KEEP THEM?

Yes. The requirement is for all internal doors to be FD20 but this can be achieved by new doors or upgrading original doors to meet the standard. Any glazing however will need to be upgraded to 30 minutes fire resistance.

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I WANT TO BUILD A BASEMENT. WHAT ARE THE MAIN POINTS TO CONSIDER FROM A BUILDING REGS POINT OF VIEW?

Basements are major construction works and careful consideration needs to go into the structure.

- Means of escape
- Ventilation
- Waterproof tanking systems

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I WOULD LIKE TO CREATE AN EXTENSION WITH A GLAZED REAR WALL AND GLAZED ROOF BUT HAVE BEEN TOLD I CANNOT HAVE TOO MUCH GLASS ON AN EXTENSION. IS THIS TRUE?

It is, but by doing a whole house energy efficiency calculation you can have flexibility in the amount of glazing you can include within your home. Without this however, there are limits to the amount of glazing you can have. Jhai offer this calculation and other Energy Assessment services.

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DO I NEED A SMOKE DETECTOR IN MY HOUSE?

New houses should have a suitable number of mains operated self-contained smoke alarms. There is no requirement to install smoke detectors in existing buildings but if you are undertaking home improvements they are always recommended.

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IS A STEPPED APPROACH TO A NEW DWELLING ACCEPTABLE?

Yes, but generally only where the plot gradient exceeds 1 in 15 or where there are planning constraints. Steps must be designed to meet the needs of disabled people. There should be a clear landing of 900mm at the top and bottom of the stair, a suitable handrail should be provided to one side of the steps where the flight comprises three or more risers and step profiles should be designed to avoid tripping hazards.

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WILL STANDARD LIGHT FITTINGS FITTED WITH LOW ENERGY LIGHT BULBS SATISFY THE REQUIREMENTS OF PART L 2013?

Yes, the guidance documents supporting Part L 2013 allow for either:

- Dedicated fittings that only accept low energy bulbs, or
- Standard fittings (e.g. Edison screw or bayonet mount) supplied with low energy bulbs.



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DO I HAVE TO HAVE LOW FLOW FITTINGS TO TAPS AND SHOWERS IN MY NEW HOUSE?

A new house is now required to demonstrate a theoretical limit on the use of water to 125 litres per person per day so there may be some restrictions on the type of fittings you can use.

A water usage calculation will determine what type of fittings you can use and you can also off-set by using a rainwater harvesting system for example.

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FOR DWELLING HOUSES, WHERE IS THE 45M HOSE DISTANCE FOR FIRE BRIGADE ACCESS MEASURED?

The measurement is taken from the site entrance or the fire tender turning circle position. The Fire Brigade should be able to access all points of a dwelling within 45m from this point.

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WHEN IS A LARGE HALLWAY IN A DWELLING HOUSE, CONSIDERED A HABITABLE ROOM FOR THE PURPOSES OF PART B?

The following factors can be considered:

1. The potential for the space to be used as a dining space, lounge or study.
2. The layout of the dwelling and arrangement of doors in relation to means of escape in case of fire.
3. The proportion of the rooms and hall in relation to the overall size of the dwelling

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CAN I PROVIDE A STEP TO AN ALTERNATIVE ESCAPE WINDOW IF THE INSTALLED WINDOW HAS A CILL HEIGHT MORE THAN 1100MM ABOVE THE FINISHED FLOOR LEVEL?

Such an arrangement should only be considered if a step is part of the permanent structure of the floor. An easy alternative would be to provide access to a protected stairway with FD20 fire doors.

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DO I NEED TO PROVIDE FIRE RESISTANT COVERS TO DOWNLIGHTERS?

For standard timber and plasterboard floor constructions with up to 30 minutes fire resistance you don't need to provide any additional protection for downlighters in ceilings (TRADA Technology Report 1/2001). If using engineered joists, fire hoods should be provided as the timber joists do not incorporate sufficient sacrificial charring in the event of fire.

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CAN I VENTILATE ONE ROOM THROUGH AN ADJOINING ROOM IF I AM BUILDING AN EXTENSION?

Yes. You need to ensure the internal room isn't a bedroom, and also provide enough openable windows and doors in the adjoining room for the combined floor area. The minimum required is 1/20th of the floor area for windows or doors and you also need to provide additional background ventilation to the space. Always seek advice from us on ventilation issues.

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IS IT TRUE THAT I CAN'T USE ROUND DOORKNOBS ON MY HOUSE DOORS?

It's true that in commercial buildings such as shops, offices and schools, doors should have lever handles that are easily used by people with impaired dexterity. However this does not apply to domestic projects.

What is a SAP? Can I have a spill-level ground floor? What is the Code for Sustainable Homes? Can I build with cob, straw bale or rammed earth?...

... You'll probably have hundreds of questions that will need answering as your project progresses. You can guarantee that we will be there to provide instant help and advice. Our services are competitively priced and will often be cheaper than your Local Authority. We also provide a range of Energy Assessment Services and have in-house experts in the fields of Sustainability, Accessibility and Fire.