

Can I extend my house without planning permission?

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Introduction

Certain types of development are automatically granted planning permission by the government. This is called “permitted development”. Under permitted development rights people can, in certain circumstances, build small extensions to their homes or build outbuildings in their gardens without the need to make a planning application. This advice note provides a simple summary of the complex rules relating to permitted development for existing houses only and does not apply to other forms of residential use such as flats or mobile homes. It is not a definitive source of legal information.

Extensions and conservatories

An extension or addition to your home would not normally require a planning application provided it complies with all of the following limits and conditions:

- (a) No more than half the area of land around the original* house would be covered by additions or other buildings;
- (b) The extension is no higher than the highest part of the roof of the existing house;
- (c) No part of the extension would extend beyond of wall which fronts a highway forms either the principal** elevation or a side elevation of the original house;
- (d) The maximum eaves and ridge height of the extension are no higher than those of the existing house;
- (e) For extensions within 2 metres of a boundary, the eaves do not exceed three metres in height; and
- (f) No verandas, balconies or raised platforms are proposed.

In addition, single storey extensions or additions must not

- project more than 3 metres from the rear wall of the original* house (or 4 metres for a detached house) or
- exceed 4 metres in height

In addition to points (a) to (f) above, further limits apply to extensions or additions in excess of one storey in height. Extensions of more than one storey in height must

- not project more than 3 metres from the rear wall of the original* house;
- not be within 7 metres of any boundary of the house which is opposite the rear wall of the house; and
- must have the same roof pitch as far as practicable as the original* house

Side extensions must

- be single storey with a maximum height of 4 metres and be no wider than half the width of the original house.

* The term "original house" means the house as it was first built or as it stood on 1 July 1948 (if it was built before that date). Although you may not have built an extension to the house, a previous owner may have done so.

** What is a “principal elevation” is a matter of judgement and not defined in planning law. However, it is what most people would say is the front of the house. It will often be the part of the house which fronts the highway and which usually contains the main entrance. On corner sites or where there is more than one entrance to the property, a house could have a second or even third “principal” elevation.

For **all** extensions and additions

- the materials used in any exterior work (other than for a conservatory) must be of a similar appearance to those used in the construction of the exterior of the existing house.
- Any new upper floor side facing window to be inserted in a wall or roof slope of the house must be obscure glazed and non opening unless the parts of the window which can be opened are more than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which the window is installed.

Further restrictions apply in conservation areas and the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which mean that artificial cladding, side extensions and rear extensions more than one storey in height require planning permission.

Most extensions of properties require approval under the building regulations. You must also check that your right to construct extensions or additions has not been removed by a planning condition or other restriction.

Porches

The planning rules for porches are applicable to any external door to the house. You need to apply for planning permission when:

- the ground floor area (measured externally) would exceed 3 square metres;
- any part would be more than 3 metres above ground level;
- any part of the porch would be within 2 metres of any boundary of the house and the highway; or
- your right to construct extensions or additions has been removed by a planning condition or other restriction.

Decking and raised platforms

Putting up decking, or other raised platforms (such as tree houses), in your garden needs planning permission if

- the decking is more than 30cm above the ground, or
- together with other extensions, outbuildings etc, the decking or platforms cover more than 50% of the garden area.

Detached sheds, greenhouses, garages and garden structures

The rules governing detached outbuildings apply to sheds, greenhouses and garages as well as other domestic garden buildings such as swimming pools, ponds, sauna cabins, enclosures (including tennis courts) and many other kinds of structure for the personal enjoyment of the occupants of the house. Other rules relate to the installation of a satellite dish, the erection of a new residential accommodation (such as annexes) or the erection or provision of fuel storage tanks.

Domestic outbuildings are normally permitted development, not needing planning permission, provided they comply with all the following limits and conditions:

- The building would not be forward of a wall forming the principal** elevation of the original house.

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** What is a "principal elevation" is a matter of judgement and not defined in planning law. However, it is what most people would say is the front of the house. It will often be the part of the house which fronts the highway and which usually contains the main entrance. On corner sites or where there is more than one entrance to the property, a house could have a second or even third "principal" elevation.

- The building is not more than one storey with a maximum eaves height of 2.5 metres.
- The building is not more than 4 metres in height if it has a dual pitched roof or 3 metres in height if it has any other form of roof.
- Where the building would be within 2 metres of a boundary, it does not exceed 2.5 metres in height.
- No verandas, balconies or raised platforms are proposed.
- No more than half the area of land around the original house* would be covered by additions or other buildings.
- The building would be within the grounds of a listed building.
- Your right to construct outbuildings has not been removed by a planning condition or other restriction.
- In the AONB the maximum area to be covered by buildings, enclosures, containers and pools more than 20 metres from a house does not exceed 10 square metres.
- In the AONB and conservation areas, buildings, enclosures, pools and containers cannot be situated between the side elevation of the house and the boundary of the garden

Fences, gates and garden walls

You will need to apply for planning permission if you wish to erect or add to a fence, wall or gate and:

- it would be over 1 metre high and be adjacent to a highway used by vehicles (or the footway of such a highway); or over 2 metres high elsewhere; or
- your right to put up or alter fences, walls and gates has been removed by a planning condition or other restriction; or
- your house is a listed building or in the curtilage of a listed building, or
- the fence, wall or gate, or any other boundary involved, forms a boundary with a listed building or its grounds.

What is “adjacent” is a matter of judgement and not defined in planning law. However, where a fence is more than 3 metres back from the highway we would not normally consider that it is adjacent to it.

Patios and hard standings

The provision of a hard surface or the replacement of a hard surface within your garden is normally permitted development unless:

- the hard surface would be situated between the principal** elevation of the house and a highway; and
- the area of ground covered by the hard surface (or the hard surface to be replaced) would exceed 5 square metres; and
- the hard surface is not made of porous materials or does not include provision for direct run off from the hard surface to a permeable or porous area within the grounds of your house.

Dormer windows and alterations or enlargements to the roof

Planning permission is not normally needed to enlarge a house by making additions (such as dormer windows) to the roof provided the alterations do not :

- exceed the height of the highest part of the roof;

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- extend beyond the plane of any existing roof slope which forms the principal** elevation of the house and fronts a highway;
- have a resulting roof space the cubic content of which would exceed the cubic content of the original roof space by more than 40 cubic metres in a terraced house or 50 cubic metres elsewhere;
- include or provide a veranda, balcony or raised platform; or
- use materials in any exterior work which are not of a similar appearance to those used in the construction of the exterior of the existing house.

Except for hip to gable enlargements, the edge of the enlargement closest to the eaves of the original roof must, as far as practicable, be set back at least 20cm from the eaves of the original roof. Any other alterations to the roof (such as rooflights) must not protrude more than 150mm beyond the plane of the slope of the roof.

Any new upper floor window to be inserted in a side wall or roof slope of the house must be obscure glazed and non opening unless the parts of the window which can be opened are more than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which the window is installed.

Chimneys, flues, soil and vent pipes

The installation, alteration or replacement of chimneys, flues, soil and vent pipes on a house will not normally need planning permission unless:

- it would exceed the highest part of the roof by 1 metre or more;
- in conservation areas or the AONB it would be installed on a wall facing a highway which forms either the principal** elevation or side elevation of the house.
- your right to construct additions has been removed by a planning condition or other restriction

Further information

This advice note provides a simple summary of the complex rules relating to permitted development for existing houses. It is an introductory guide only and is not a definitive source of legal information. The rules explained here do not apply to flats, caravans or other forms of residential use other than individual houses. More detailed information can be obtained by visiting the Planning Portal website www.planningportal.gov.uk or by seeking our site specific written advice about the need for planning permission for works at your property. Please see our separate advice note for further information. Obtaining planning permission is a separate matter from building regulations approval. Although you may not need to make a planning application for many of the types of work listed here, you may still need separate approval under building regulations. Works to listed buildings will normally need separate listed building consent regardless of whether planning permission is needed.

This publication is available in large print, Braille or audio formats on request. Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.
Please contact 01275 888 811

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