

Loft Conversions

A loft conversion is one of the most technically complex projects that can be carried out on a domestic property. When a loft becomes used for anything other than domestic light storage a Building Regulation application is required.

We recommend that a Full Plans Application be made for a loft conversion. If a Building Notice is submitted, plans/drawings showing structural alterations and fire precautions will usually be requested.

The following parts of the regulations apply to loft conversions:

1. Part A Structure

Most ceiling joists and trussed rafters are designed to take a loading of only 0.25KN/m² (approx 25kg/m²). Therefore new floor joists will normally be required. If there are no load bearing walls below, then steel beams may be required to support the floor. Details will also be required of trimming joists to stairwells and the construction of dormer windows.

Loft conversions of roofs formed from trussed rafters require special design by a structural engineer.

2. Part B Fire Safety

There are two aspects of fire safety to be considered:

a) Structural fire precautions

The regulations require that the new floor should have 30 minutes fire resistance. The existing first floor will also need to be upgraded to 30 minutes fire resistance where it supports a stair or landing.

b) Means of escape in case of fire

The stair on ground and first storeys should be enclosed with walls which are 30 minutes fire resisting and the escape route must lead to open air.

- (i) All doorways within the enclosure should be fitted with a door which, except for WC.s and bathrooms, should be fitted with a self-closing device.
- (ii) Any glazing within the enclosure must be fire resisting except where it serves a bathroom or WC.
- (iii) Any new doors and the door to new room(s) in the roof are also required to be fire doors (F20 standard).
- (iv) The new storey must be separated from the rest of the house by 30 minute fire resisting construction either at the first floor level or at the top of the new stairway.
- (v) Each room in the new storey should have a window accessible for rescue by ladder. The window opening must have an unobstructed openable area that is at least 0.33m² and at least 450mm high and 450mm wide with the bottom of the opening between 800 and 1100 from the floor (600-1100 for rooflights). If this is not possible a fully protected stairway is required.
- (vi) Mains operated interlinked smoke alarms should be provided on each level of the building, usually within the stairway enclosure.
- (vii) Handrails and guarding will be required to both new and existing staircases to safeguard the escape route from the loft room.

The above requirements apply to loft conversions to two storey houses where the proposal is for not more than two new rooms and the new floor area will not exceed 50 square meters. Loft conversions to bungalows do not need to comply with requirements (i) to (iv), only (v) to (vii).

3. Part C Resistance to Moisture

The roof and any new dormer must be weather tight.

