



# Building Control and Community Buildings

## Introduction

This factsheet on Building Control has been produced by Community Places to assist community and voluntary groups who are planning a building project. Building Control is based at your local Council offices and is responsible for ensuring that Building Regulations are enforced. The regulations include requirements on health, structural stability, fire safety, energy conservation and accessibility. Building Control communicates with other bodies such as the Fire and Rescue Service.

## Work Requiring an Application for Building Control Approval

Examples of work where Building Regulations apply and which require an approval are:

- Extending an existing building.
- Changing the use of a building (eg from a house to offices or community use).
- Carrying out structural alterations such as replacing existing walls, floors, roofs, stairs.
- General works such as making two rooms into one, installing cavity wall insulation, drylining walls or lining walls/ceilings with sheeting or boarding, replacing fire doors.
- Accessibility alterations such as installing access ramps to the entrance of a building, installing a lift in your premises or providing accessible toilet facilities.
- Provision of services or fittings such as installation of central heating, replacement/relining flues, installation of new sanitary appliances.

## Exemptions

Some works do not require a Building Control application, such as replacement windows; replacement boilers; replacement sanitary fittings and drainage. Before proceeding with any work you should contact your local council Building Control office or consult a competent building professional to check that your proposed works are exempt.

## Making an Application

If an application is required, you must lodge an application along with full plans to your local Building Control office prior to starting any work. You can be prosecuted for failing to do this. A full plans application requires you or your agent (eg your architect) to complete an application form and to provide the following:

- Two copies of plans, sections, construction details and a further two sets of plans showing compliance with fire safety regulations (these will be forwarded to the Fire and Rescue Service by Building Control).
- A site location plan and a block plan showing boundaries and adjacent buildings.
- A plan fee accompanied by an itemised and realistic estimate of cost.

You should ensure that you get assistance from an experienced person who has a good working knowledge of Building Regulations.

## **Fees**

A Fee Calculator can be found on the Building Control website, you need to know the estimated cost of the works in order to work out the fees. For example the full fee for building works costing £30,000.00 excluding VAT is currently £380.00 and the full fee for building works costing £60,000.00 excluding VAT is currently £620.00. The fee is paid in two stages to Building Control:

- a Plan Fee (25% of the full fee) - this is deposited with your application form and drawings; and
- an Inspection Fee (75% of the full fee) - this is payable after the initial inspection by Building Control when work has started. It is a one-off payment and covers all inspections carried out until completion.

## **Timescale**

When you lodge the application Building Control will assess it for compliance with the regulations within 28 days and either issue a Plan Stage approval or notify you of any required amendments. It will assess your amendments within 14 days. You will then receive a Plan Stage Approval Notice and a set of stamped approved drawings.

If your work does require Building Control Approval you will need to send this Plan Stage Approval Notice with your application to the Big Lottery Fund.

## **Completion Certificate**

Once works have started on site Building Control surveyors carry out on-site inspections at various stages of construction. Upon satisfactory completion of the works a Completion Certificate is issued. This Certificate gives the date of the final inspection carried out and states that, as far as can be reasonably ascertained, the work carried out conforms to the Building Regulations. As the final part of the process, a Completion Certificate is forwarded to you following a satisfactory final inspection. The Completion Certificate verifies that a property complies with legal guidelines and has been subject to Building Regulations inspections carried out by independent and impartial professionals and thus reassures all those with interests in the building such as owners, funders, insurance companies, solicitors, banks etc.

## **Further Information**

Further information (contact details of your local council Building Control office, application forms and the fee calculator) can be found on Building Control's website <http://www.buildingcontrol-ni.com>.

## **Contact Details**

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# Building Control and Community Buildings (Update)

## Introduction

The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) were amended on 30 November 2006. This update to our Factsheet provides examples of changes introduced and should be read along with the original factsheet. These changes refer to most parts of the factsheet including the exemptions paragraph.

Technical Booklet F2 - "Conservation of Fuel Power in Buildings other than Dwellings" has been introduced which places more emphasis on the energy usage and heat loss from buildings. This booklet covers new buildings, extensions and alterations to existing buildings.

## Extensions to Buildings

Booklet F2 has introduced new performance standards for elements of extensions. Examples include:

- the total area of all windows and external doors in an extension cannot be more than 40% of the external wall area;
- any roof lights cannot exceed 20% of the extension roof area;
- higher standards (called u-values) for reducing heat loss through floors, walls, roof and windows;
- the extension must be constructed to minimise air leakage;
- any extension or replacement of central heating or hot water systems and their controls must meet the efficiencies given in the new publication "Non Domestic Heating, Cooling and Ventilation Compliance Guide";
- energy meters must be provided to allow the consumption of each fuel to be measured (ie oil, gas or electric).

## Alterations to Existing Buildings and Change of Use

- Where more than 25% of a wall, floor or roof is to be renovated it must be upgraded to achieve the new u-values.
- If upgrading to these new standards is not technically or functionally feasible the building can be upgraded to the best practicable standard that can be achieved within a simple payback period of 15 years. For example where the cost of upgrading an element would not provide annual savings less than this cost over 15 years it would not be considered as cost effective and would not have to fully meet the new standards.

- If you are altering services (eg heating, plumbing or electrics) please discuss your proposals with Building Control before submitting your application. It is likely that some elements of these new regulations will apply.

If your alterations are for accessibility improvement works, please read our Accessibility Factsheet Update.

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