

## SOUND INSULATION

When converting a loft in attached properties (e.g. semi-detached or terraced houses), consideration must be given to sound insulation of party walls within the loft space. Parts of the wall may have to be upgraded.

## THERMAL INSULATION

A loft conversion creates new “thermal elements”. Thermal elements are walls and roofs that separate the heated space from an unheated space or the outside air. The thermal insulating properties of each element must be upgraded to comply with Part L of the Building Regulations.

## ELECTRICAL WORK

Electrical work must comply with Part P of the Building Regulations. A contractor who is a member of a “Competent Persons” scheme (such as NAPIT, ELECSA, NICEIC) should carry out the design, inspection and testing, and issue a certificate on completion of the electrical work. If this is not the case, contact Building Control for advice before carrying out the work.

## OTHER APPROVALS

In certain circumstances, you may require Planning permission in addition to Building Regulations approval.

**For further advice, please contact:-  
Building Control Unit  
Planning Services  
Bassetlaw District Council  
Queen’s Buildings  
Potter Street  
Worksop  
Notts  
S80 2AH**

**Telephone: 01909 533292  
Fax: 01909 533400**

**e-mail: [building.control@bassetlaw.gov.uk](mailto:building.control@bassetlaw.gov.uk)**

# ROOF SPACE CONVERSIONS

## BUILDING CONTROL GUIDANCE NOTE



OF A SERIES






**BASSETLAW**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

## LOFT CONVERSIONS

This leaflet does not provide comprehensive details but highlights the most important matters where your proposals involve conversion of an existing domestic roof space.

Loft conversions are more complex than other extensions; therefore we recommend that unless you are fully conversant with loft conversion design, you should seek professional assistance before submitting a full plans application for Building Regulations approval.

Please note that the fire safety advice given in this leaflet is only relevant to loft conversions where:



-  the floor is not more than 7.5 metres above external ground level, and either
-  not more than two rooms are to be created, or
-  the floor area of the loft is not more than 50 square metres.

## IS AN APPLICATION REQUIRED?

Building Regulations permission is required for loft conversions that create any type of room in the roof space, even when it is only for storage use. However, an application is not required where a small proportion of the space is boarded for light storage or access to water tanks, provided that a portable or retractable loft ladder serves the loft area.

## STRUCTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Most ceiling structures are not strong enough to be used as a floor. Upgrading the structure may involve the installation of new floor joists; in some cases steel or timber beams may be needed.

-  Existing walls, lintels and beams may need an assessment to make sure they can carry additional loads. In some cases, foundations may need to be exposed and checked; underpinning could be necessary.
-  If new steel or timber members are required, you may need to appoint a structural engineer to calculate the sizes.

## FIRE SAFETY





In the event of a fire, a room in the roof of a two-storey house creates potentially high risk to occupants. For this reason, a protected escape route must be formed between the new rooms and a final exit, such as the front entrance door. The walls forming the route must have 30 minutes' fire resistance, and the doors must be FD20 rated fire doors. The current edition (2006) of Approved Document B (Fire Safety) does not require these doors to be fitted with self-closing devices. Existing floors separating rooms from landings may need upgrading to achieve a 30-minute fire rating.

The staircase enclosure should lead directly to a final exit to the external air (that is, via a ground floor hallway), without passing through a room. If this cannot be achieved, then it is permissible to form two alternative routes to exits that are separated from each other by fire resisting construction and fire doors. Approved Document B explains the options available.

Achieving the requirements can be difficult and may be undesirable to clients. Greater flexibility may be achieved by incorporating a sprinkler system which complies with BS 9251:2005. Smoke alarms should be fitted at every floor level. These should be mains powered with a battery back up, and conform to BS 5446. They should also be interlinked so that the activation of a single unit will trigger all the sounders in the dwelling.

## ACCESS TO THE NEW ROOMS

A retractable ladder is not permitted as access to a loft conversion. The four types of stair that can be considered are:

-  a standard staircase
-  a spiral staircase
-  an alternating tread ("Space Saver") staircase
-  a fixed ladder

Alternating tread staircases or fixed ladders are only acceptable where they would serve a single room and where it is impossible to fit a standard or spiral stair.

The pitch (steepness) of the stairs, and the dimensions of the steps and balustrade must comply with Part K of the Building Regulations.

Clear headroom of 2 metres is required over the staircase, although slight reductions may be allowed, depending on individual circumstances.