BUILDING CONVERSIONS

A beginner's guide to property conversion

CONSENTS AND COMPLIANCE | ENGAGING PROFESSIONALS | COMMON CONVERSIONS

Bury Council

RESURFACING & LANDSCAPING

SPECIALISTS

A&T Resurfacing & Landscaping
Local Authority Approved

Looking for a resurfacing & landscaping specialist in Blackburn and East Lancashire? Look no further than A&T Resurfacing.

With over 25 years of experience in domestic & commercial resurfacing & landscaping, you can trust A & T Resurfacing for honest and reliable services.

Our Services:

- ASPHALT
- DRIVEWAYS
- PAVING
- LANDSCAPING
- RESIN BONDED DRIVEWAYS

We can install stunning driveways, patios, paving and more. Simply let us know your requirements and we will handle it all. We serve in Blackburn, Accrington, Preston and the surrounding areas.

T: 01254 392897
M: 07930 128 536
E: info@aandtresurfacingandlandscaping.co.uk
www.aandtresurfacingandlandscaping.co.uk

CONVERSIONS

JB

- Newbuilds
- Extensions
- All Building Work
- House Renovations
- Open Plan Your Living Space

T: 07814 124886

E: jbbuilders99@yahoo.co.uk

NEVER BIN GREENER

LANDSCAPING AND EXCAVATION

FREE QUOTES & DESIGNS

ABOUT NEVER BIN GREENER

We have years of experience throughout our team of skilled workers offering you everything from Hard Landscaping to Garden Maintenance. We have been established since 2018 & are a sister company to Never Bin Cleaner, which is a bin cleaning & power-washing company based in Rochdale & the surrounding areas.

Throughout our companies we have all 5* ratings and no bad press at all, we offer invoices & contracts so your fully covered with the final payment being released to us when you, the customer are 100% happy with the completion of the work.

CONTACT US FOR YOUR FREE QUOTE & DESIGN

07495 815656 | info@neverbingreenerltd.co.uk | www.neverbingreenerltd.co.uk

NEVER BIN CLEANER

"YOU'VE NEVER BIN CLEANER, COS YOU'VE NEVER BIN CLEANER"

DOMESTIC & COMMERCIAL BIN CLEANING SERVICE

DRIVEWAYS • PATIOS/DECKING/GUTTER CLEANING

Here at NEVER BIN CLEANER we offer many services to bring your outdoor areas back to life. As well as CLEANING the areas using high pressure we can also grind and re-point patios for an extra fee. We also offer re-sanding and re-sealing of block paved driveways after CLEANING. Whatever it may be please contact us for your FREE no-obligation quote today!

CONTACT US TODAY FOR YOUR FREE QUOTE

07495 815656 | info@neverbincleanerltd.co.uk | www.neverbincleanerltd.co.uk

Contents

We very gratefully acknowledge the support of the firms whose advertisements appear throughout this publication.

As a reciprocal gesture we have pleasure in drawing the attention of our readers to their announcements.

It is necessary however for it to be made clear that, whilst every care has been taken in compiling this publication and the statements it contains, neither the promoter involved nor the Publisher can accept responsibility for any inaccuracies, or for the products or services advertised.

Designed and published by Building Control Communications (part of zinc media), Kings House, Royal Court, Brook Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 7AE.

Tel: (01625) 613000. www.zincmedia.com Ref: BHH 2023 © Building Control Communications. All rights reserved.

UK INSULATION SOLUTIONS

Welcome to UK Insulation Solutions Ltd

At UK Insulation Solutions Ltd our team has 12 + years experience in the building & insulation trade. We cover the whole of the UK & all types of insulation installs, modifications and heat retention methods.

We offer free no obligation surveys & quotes

We pride ourselves on customer satisfaction assisting you in every way possible to insulate the home, increase your EPC rating and reduce energy bills.

For the past 5 years we have been working with the government's ECO 2 & 3 schemes upgrading properties EPC ratings nationwide from G to A.

We specialise in:

- Loft Insulation & boarding installs
- Loft ladder & hatch installs
- Underfloor/Cellar & Suspended floor insulation installs (UFI)
- Internal Wall Insulation (I.W.I)
- For Cavity Wall & External Wall (E.W.I) Insulation Installs please contact our office

For our customer feedback & reviews please check our Checkatrade & Mybuilder profiles

We are also available via Instagram at: uk_insulation_solutions
or our local website: www.warringtoninsulation.co.uk (Facebook page coming soon)

For more information please contact our office on: 01925 948163 or alternatively 07467 281449

Outside of office hours you are welcome to send a text to the mobile number above or you can contact us via email at: Insulationsolutions@mail.com

Thank you for taking the time to consider our profile, We look forward to hearing from you.

UK Insulation Solutions Ltd

Introduction

There is an abundance of redundant or disused properties in the UK suitable for conversion into much-needed residential accommodation – empty shops, offices, barns, churches, mills and even former industrial buildings have all been remodelled to provide new homes.

However, converting a property into dwellings is a complex undertaking and presents a multitude of challenges for the developer. Converting old or derelict buildings will often require quite drastic interventions, not only in terms of layout, materials and possibly openings created or closed in the building fabric, but also structural alterations which may be significant and require an engineer's input. All this will require a thorough understanding of how buildings work and how they can be altered in the most cost-effective way to achieve the desired aesthetic and functional results.

Many of these instances will require planning consent, perhaps including an application for change of use if the new use of the building is in a different class from the old use, and the change is not considered a permitted development. If the building is listed or lies in a conservation area, then further restrictions will apply.

Any proposed changes must comply with the building regulations, particularly regarding thermal insulation, sound insulation, fire protection, means of escape, ventilation, access and so on.

Legal and financial matters can be complex and should be considered from the outset, and where necessary, the expert advice of a construction lawyer should be sought.

This guide, while not a substitute for professional advice, is intended to provide practical guidance for developers who are considering converting a property to residential use. It will help applicants understand where this change of use may be appropriate and where it will not. It will also give general and detailed design advice to help you achieve a quality conversion and highlight the issues that planning and local authority building control look for when considering your application.

The key to any successful conversion is thinking it through first, planning ahead and making contingency plans for any unexpected surprises that may (and often do!) crop up along the way. A lot will depend on the type of property you are looking to convert, but by choosing Bury Council Building Control team for your building control service, you are on the right path.

Starting out

Justifying the project is the first, and perhaps the most important stage of your conversion journey. The process will involve a significant amount of background research to assess whether the project is worth pursuing and likely to be deliverable. Because of the importance of these issues, it can be beneficial to seek expert advice early on, perhaps from an architect with experience of the type of conversion you are looking to undertake.

It's worth setting out on paper the requirements that could justify the project. This might include assessment of:

- The likelihood of obtaining a suitable property
- The likelihood of obtaining planning permission and/or listed building consent
- The likely order of cost of the project (including fees, taxes, contingency, fixtures and fittings and so on)
- The availability of funds
- The likely delivery route
- The likely length of the project programme
- An assessment of project risk
- Assessment of comparable completed projects
- An assessment of the amount of time that can be dedicated to the project
- The strategy for managing the project
- An assessment of the assistance that might be required
- A preliminary organisational structure for the project
- The likely value of the finished project.

The project should only proceed if this assessment suggests the project is viable, desirable, achievable and affordable.

Why choose local authority building control?

Choosing your local authority building control team for your new extension will give you peace of mind and is a positive choice for many reasons:

- We act in your best interest, protecting you the homeowner. Our number one priority is the safety and comfort of residents in their home.
- We'll work with you to ensure your new extension is safe, healthy, inclusive and efficient, and meets the standards set by the building regulations.
- We'll provide an independent, impartial overview of the key stages of the project, giving you the reassurance that your project is on track.
- Because we are a not-for-profit organisation, we offer homeowners value for money by doing a really good job without compromising on safety.
- We will provide a prompt, professional service, offering same-day site inspections where possible.
- We have been providing building regulation services for longer than anyone else so have extensive knowledge of the local area, including ground conditions and drainage.
- We can advise your builder by highlighting any unforeseen technical issues. We'll provide practical advice throughout which can help cut both short and long term costs.
- We are always ready to help, even when things get difficult or the unexpected happens.
- With local authority building control, the support doesn't stop when the project does, we're always on hand to provide assistance. If you require a copy of a completion certificate in 10 years' time for example, you can rest assured we will still be around.
- We are backed up by a national network of local authority building control teams (LABC), a 3,700 strong network of professional building surveyors and technical support staff. LABC constantly reviews surveyor competence, ensuring the performance and standards of our teams is of the highest level. LABC also works with manufacturers, trade bodies, professional institutions and other recognised bodies, giving us access to national expertise when required.
- Local authority building control is the biggest building control provider in the country, working on the majority of construction projects in the area.

J&M Ltd

J&M Demolition have experience in demolishing everything from Industrial Sites, schools and churches to terraced houses.

As well as Demolition and Recycled Aggregates J&M can offer full Land Remediation services, ground works, material haulage and Plant Hire.

- Demolition
- Land Remediation
- Recycled Aggregates
- Haulage
- Plant Hire
- Groundworks
- Grab Hire
- Wagon Hire

Office: 01204 691 421
John: 07739 617 899
Michael: 07772 158 318

Consents and compliance

There are generally three areas where consent will be required for conversion work: Planning, Building Regulations and Environmental Health. The latter will be applicable if looking to convert to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and/or where food preparation is required.

Planning

One of the first consents you will need before works commence is planning permission from your local council.

Planning permission is normally required for conversion projects if:

- You want to build something new
- You want to make a major change to your building – like building an extension
- You want to change the use of your building
- Your building is in a conservation area or is listed (See box out page 11).

Planning decisions are based on local authority's Development Plan and will look at things like:

- The size, layout, siting and external appearance of buildings
- The infrastructure available – such as roads and water supply
- Any landscaping needs
- What you want to use the development for
- Environmental impacts

Before you buy any property for conversion, you will need to check whether you need to

obtain planning permission for your intended use, and, if so, your chances of getting it.

This will depend on the building's 'use class' and what you can do as 'permitted development' (see box out below). Some types of development may already be permitted nationally, and for these there is no need to apply for planning permission locally. Permitted development rights are, however, typically subject to conditions and limitations that control development impacts. If the development proposed does not meet with the conditions and limitations of permitted development then it is necessary to apply to the local planning authority for full planning permission.

An application for planning permission may be a detailed planning application, or if there was already an outline planning permission for the site, a reserved matters application for the details of the design.

Before making a planning application it's worth contacting the local planning authority to find out:

- When planning meetings are held and what procedures need to be followed.
- Agree on what information will be provided in the application and the fees payable.
- To gauge their likely reaction to the proposed development.
- To discuss planning conditions or planning obligations that may be imposed on the development – there may be additional requirements for developments in conservation areas for example.

Once an application has been submitted, it may be necessary to respond to questions from the local planning authority and it could be beneficial to make representations to the planning committee. After consideration of comments received, or following the decision (which may include planning conditions or planning obligations), it may be appropriate to submit a revised application, or to lodge a planning appeal.

For further information about planning, use classes, and permitted development rights, please visit the Planning Portal: www.planningportal.co.uk

Permitted development rights

The Government has recently introduced a raft of new permitted development rights in order to boost housing supply and enable appropriate development to take place more quickly. The main driver of recent change has been a need to enable the repurposing of redundant buildings on high streets and in town centres.

In terms of the new permitted development rights, the ability to demolish and replace office and light industrial buildings with dwellings provides another avenue to enable creative forms of residential development.

It is expected that further PDRs may be introduced as part of a wider overhaul of the planning system.

Listed buildings and conservation areas

Before converting an historic building it's important to check whether it is listed or located in a conservation area. If so, it will have additional protections.

Conservation areas

Planning rules are far stricter in conservation areas, where consent will be needed for any significant alterations that are visible to the 'principle elevation' (normally the front). You will also need planning permission for most demolition work, including taking down gates, fences, walls and railings. If you're not sure whether a property is located in a conservation area, you need to check with the council's planning department.

Listed buildings

Listed buildings are those recognised to be of 'special architectural or historic interest'.

In England & Wales listed buildings are categorised as either:

- Grade I - Buildings of exceptional interest or rarity
- Grade II * - Buildings of particular importance of more than special interest
- Grade II - Buildings of special interest which warrant every effort being made to preserve them (the vast majority of listed buildings are Grade II-listed).

Where a property is listed any proposed works, including internal alterations, will require an application for listed building consent (which can be combined with your application for planning permission). Should you fail to do so it is a criminal offence to carry out unauthorised work or to instruct someone else do it for you. However, like-for-like repairs do not usually require consent. The best advice is to first consult the conservation officer at your local authority.

Listing doesn't automatically mean that all change is forbidden – the system simply sets out to preserve the character of the buildings, favouring preservation. However, it's not just the 'old bits' that are protected. Consent is needed even for reversals of existing, relatively modern alterations.

Outside the house, structures such as garden walls and outbuildings etc may also be protected. Usually any buildings or objects located within the original boundaries of a listed property are also legally protected, including any old stables, storerooms and garages etc.

You can check whether a building is listed via the website www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk

CW FENCING

COMMERCIAL AND DOMESTIC

Established in 2015, CW Fencing has grown from strength to strength with almost all domestic customers now being referred to us through previous client recommendations.

The quality of our workmanship is undoubtedly second to none and our fencing and decking prices are highly competitive providing excellent value for money.

CALL US ON

07539 028 607

http://www.cwfencingbolton.co.uk

Our services include:

- Timber Fence Panels
- Composite Fence Panels
- Timber Gates
- Concrete Fence Posts
- Metal Fence Compounds
- Tree stump removal

Building Regulations – the application process

Another consent you will need is building regulations approval, which is separate from planning permission. The building regulations are detailed technical standards set down by the Government to make sure homes are built to a reasonable standard and are safe, warm and dry. They also include requirements to ensure that fuel and power is conserved and facilities are provided for people, including those with disabilities, to access and move around inside buildings.

Your local authority building control team will check the plans and actual work on site for compliance against the building regulations (For more information about how to comply with the building regulations, see page 21).

It's best to talk to your local authority building control team for advice and guidance before you begin your project. This is usually provided free of charge and could save you a lot of time and money.

What will happen if I do not comply with the building regulations?

Building works that do not comply with the building regulations are in breach and must be rectified to avoid prosecution or fines. Furthermore, if the work is found to be faulty or dangerous, or if it doesn't meet energy efficiency standards, your local

authority could insist you put it right at your own expense.

You should notify your local authority building control team before works commence, unless the works are carried out by a registered installer on a competent person scheme who can self-certify that their work is compliant (see box out below). If this does not happen, then the local authority will have no record that the work complies with building regulations. These records will be important as you will be asked to provide compliance certificates during the selling process.

What type of application do I need?

There is a choice of application routes for building regulations approval: Full Plans, Building Notices and Regularisation Applications for retrospective works.

Full plans

If you wish to have your plans checked and approved before the work starts, to avoid any costly errors and corrective work on site by not being fully up to speed with the ever-changing regulations, we recommend you apply using the Full Plans route.

An application deposited under this procedure needs to contain plans and other information showing all construction details, preferably well in advance of when work is to start on site.

Your local authority building control team will check your plans for compliance and best practice and consult any appropriate authorities including the fire service and water authority.

If your plans comply with the building regulations then your local authority building control team will issue an Approval Notice. You or your agent may be asked to make amendments or provide more details

Self certification

Competent person schemes are a way for tradespeople to prove their ability to carry out certain work to required standards, instead of you applying for building regulations approval.

An installer (of windows or boilers for example) who's registered with a scheme can self-certify that their work complies with buildings regulations and they can deal with any building control issues should they arise.

If needed, they'll tell your local authority about work on your behalf. They'll also give you a certificate within eight weeks of completion which can be used as evidence of compliance - it will also show up in solicitors' searches if you come to sell your property.

Competent person schemes have insurance-backed warranties and complaints procedures if there's a problem with the work.

A list of all the types of work covered by competent person schemes and contact details can be found in the Further Information section on page XX (79).

For more information about the scheme, visit www.competentperson.co.uk

before this can be issued. Sometimes a conditional approval may be issued. This will either specify modifications which must be made to the plans or will specify further plans, calculations or design details which must be added to your application.

In the event that your plans have to be rejected, the reasons will be stated in the notice and you will be given the opportunity to resubmit your information with the additional information at no further cost. Your local authority building control team will work with you or your agent/architect to help you obtain approval.

A full plans approval notice is valid for three years from the date of deposit of the plans.

Building notices

You might elect to use the Building Notice route for your project. In this case you won't have to supply all the plans, details and calculations up front and can start work within 48 hours, but you should be aware that all work is essentially unchecked in advance and knowledge of and compliance with the building regulations is entirely your responsibility. You will still need structural, thermal and acoustic details, calculations and designs so it may be better to submit these early on so that your building control surveyor can assess them and advise you of any omissions or errors.

Some people think this route will save them money as plans are not required with this process so you don't need to employ an architect or designer. However, invariably a good design saves you a great deal of time and money in the long run and the Building Notice charge is generally more expensive than the Full Plans charge as more inspections are usually required.

There are also specific exclusions in the regulations as to when building notices can be used in relation to conversion work. A Building Notice cannot be used:

- For work which will be built close to or over the top of rain water and foul drains shown on the 'map of sewers'
- Where a new building will front onto a private street
- If the building contains any communal areas such as a hallway in an apartment building.

HARWOOD SCAFFOLDING SERVICES LTD

Tel: 07788 293255
Email: harwoodscaffolding@gmail.com

Harwood Scaffolding Services are a local family run business with many years in the industry, please call for a fast free quote.

Harwood Scaffolding Services Ltd is a well established scaffolding company that has built up an enviable reputation over the years.

We pride ourselves on our commitment to provide a professional and speedy service at all times, whilst maintaining the highest quality of work.

BOLTON DRIVEWAYS

EXPERTS IN DRIVEWAYS & PAVING

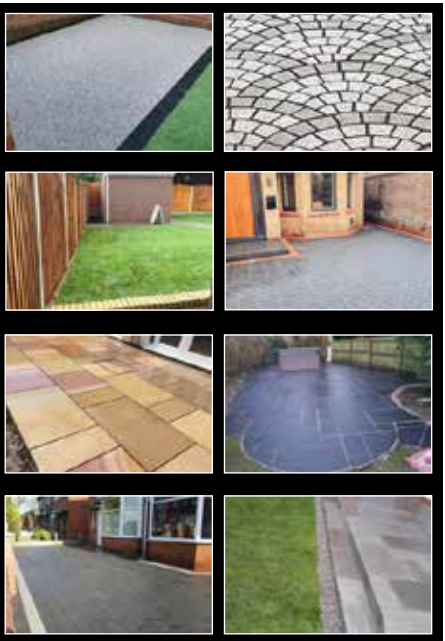
With over 15 years experience and real focus on customer satisfaction, you can trust us to deliver.

We are experts in driveways, resin, Indian stones, imprinted concrete, block paving, patios, tarmacadam and fencing.

Our Services

- ✓ Driveways
- ✓ Patios
- ✓ Fencing
- ✓ Grab Hire
- ✓ Mini Digger Hire
- ✓ Top Soil, Sand & MOT

✆ 01204 430 030 / 07786 068 990
✉ boltondrivewaysltd@yahoo.com
https://boltondriveways.co.uk



A Building Notice is valid for three years from the date the notice was given to the local authority, after which it will automatically lapse if the building work has not commenced.

Retrospective regularisation applications

If the work has already recently started or possibly even been completed without proper consent and the authority has not been notified previously, then a retrospective application can be made using a regularisation form. All building work can potentially be regularised as long as it was carried out after the 11 November 1985.

The purpose of the process is to legitimise the unauthorised works and obtain a certificate of regularisation. Depending on the circumstances, exposure, removal and/or rectification of works may be necessary to establish compliance with the building regulations.

It's best to contact your local authority building control team to discuss your individual circumstances before submitting a regularisation application.

Will my work be inspected as it progresses?

Your local authority building control team is committed to providing a robust and

What is a Party Wall?

The main types of party walls are:

- A wall that stands on the lands of two (or more) owners and forms part of a building – this wall can be part of one building only or separate buildings belonging to different owners
- A wall that stands on the lands of two owners but does not form part of a building, such as a garden wall but not including timber fences
- A wall that is on one owner's land but is used by two (or more) owners to separate their buildings

The Act covers:

- New building on or at the boundary of two properties
- Work to an existing party wall or party structure
- Excavation near to and below the foundation level of neighbouring buildings

You must have a Party Wall Award in place if necessary before you carry out any building work. Any costs incurred in setting up this award are payable by the person who wishes to carry out the work.

You can find more information on the Party Wall Act at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-resolving-disputes-in-relation-to-party-walls/the-party-wall-etc-act-1996-explanatory-booklet

accessible inspection service to its customers as part of your application. We believe that a second pair of eyes on site at regular stages of your build is the key to spotting any problems early and reducing the cost and disruption involved in putting them right.

When will my work be inspected?

The stages of inspection will usually be agreed in advance and might include:

- Different types of projects will require different inspections which might include foundations, the floor, damp proofing to walls and floors, the roof structure, any drainage, structural beams and openings, fire proofing and thermal insulation.
- Completion: The main purpose of this stage is to make sure the work meets the various building regulations before it is occupied and put into use. When your local authority building control team is happy with the work they will issue you with a completion certificate. This is an important document used by solicitors/ personal search agents when you come to sell the property and by mortgage lenders and property insurers.

You should be aware that the person carrying out the work, or if you are project managing the build yourself, you must inform the local authority:

- Before starting work and;
- When the work is complete or occupied

You can normally book a next day or even same day inspection with the local authority building control team, minimising delay and disruption.

Environmental Health

Uses such as Houses In Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and catering establishments will also need to comply with Environmental Health standards. For businesses these include such things as provision of toilets for staff and customers, facilities for food preparation and storage, plus extract ventilation, ducting etc.

Other legal issues

Developers will need to take into account other legislation associated with carrying out conversion work, including the Party Wall etc. Act 1996 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Party Wall etc. Act 1996

As a developer, you need to be aware of The Party Wall etc. Act 1996, which provides a framework for preventing and resolving disputes in relation to party walls, boundary walls and excavations near neighbouring buildings (see separate article on page 18).

A developer proposing to start work covered by the Act must give adjoining owners notice of their intentions in the way set down in the Act. Adjoining owners can agree or disagree with what is proposed. Where they disagree, the Act provides a mechanism for resolving disputes. The Act is separate from obtaining planning permission or building regulations approval.

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Where the change of use or conversion is used for a business or contains dwellings that are served by common areas the building will fall under the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This means that the fire service have enforcement powers regarding the fire safety arrangements and features in the building. In order to satisfy the Order there must be a 'suitable and sufficient' fire risk assessment carried out. ■

Protecting yourself

It is important that you are fully covered for any unfortunate events that may happen during the course of your conversion. As a bare minimum, and depending on the conversion type, you should consider the following cover.

Employers' liability insurance: You need this by law. As an employer you must arrange cover to compensate your employees if they suffer an injury, accident or are made ill whilst working and during the course of their employment. This includes direct employees; labour-only subcontractors, working directly for you, or via another person/firm; or persons you've hired from another employer.

Public liability insurance: This covers your liability to another person you do not employ, such as a visitor who is injured as a result of your building work (for example, a visitor to the site trips on a trailing cable). Public liability insurance will also cover you if one of your employees, through the course of their work activities, injures someone or damages their property.

Contract works insurance: Contract works insurance is an insurance for builders and other tradesmen, designed to cover work that's underway on a site. It's normally taken out to insure aspects of construction projects such as damage caused by an insured event such as: fire, flood, storm, vandalism or theft; material damage to on- site plant and equipment and existing structures; third party property damage; employee's tools and personal effects; and accidental damage to on-site materials.

Personal injury insurance: This additional insurance would cover you in the event of personal injury and provides a safety net should anything go wrong. If you became unable to work for example, building work may grind to a halt, which can often have major cost implications. Personal injury insurance will cover for personal accidents, permanent injury and death.

Building Regulations

What you need to know to comply

Most building work carried out in England must comply with the building regulations. The legal term 'building work' generally includes building new buildings, making buildings bigger, altering buildings and changing what they are used for.

It also covers installing a 'controlled service' or a 'controlled fitting'. A replacement window is an example of a controlled fitting. A boiler is an example of a controlled service. 'Renovation of thermal elements' is also building work. This includes roofs or external walls. Those responsible for carrying out building work have a duty to meet the requirements of the building regulations.

Generally, the building regulations set out the required standards for the building work. For example, a home must be insulated, but the building regulations do not tell you how you should do it. The approved documents, however, give help for some common problems.

There are 19 technical requirements to the building regulations. Each technical requirement corresponds to a letter – for example, Part B is fire safety. These set out some of the legal requirements of the building regulations – these are rules that

must be followed. They are often referred to as technical requirements. In addition to these, there are some other requirements in the building regulations. Some of these are about keeping energy use low. The people planning the work can decide how best to meet the rules, and there is guidance to help them. Everyone involved in carrying out building work must obey the rules. That includes: the building owner, agents, designers, builders and installers. The building regulations also allow inspections and enforcement to take place. Your local authority building control team will need to be satisfied too.

The designs and building work for converting an existing building to create new accommodation will need to comply with the building regulations in the following ways. Developers should note that if it's an historic or listed building, there will need to be a balance struck which allows conservation of historical characteristics and period features.

Part A: Structural safety

Removing internal walls, installing new beams and adding an extra storey are just some of the common structural alterations involved in conversion work. Your local authority building control team will want to see design input and structural calculations from a structural engineer at the application stage.

Part A requires buildings to be designed, constructed and altered so as to be structurally safe and robust, and also so as not to impair the structural stability of adjoining buildings.

It stipulates design standards that should be adopted for use on all buildings and additionally gives simple design rules for most masonry and timber elements for traditional domestic buildings.

There are three key areas that designs will need to comply, loading, disproportionate collapse and ground movement.

Loading: The weight of the building from the walls, furniture and people in the building will be transmitted to the ground, so as not to cause instability to the building or other buildings. The design must also accommodate additional loads in use such as the occupants, wind pressure and the weight of snow.

Disproportionate collapse: Requires buildings to be built in a way ensuring no collapse will occur disproportionately to its cause. This is to say in the event of collapse, if hit by a lorry for example, the extent of damage would be as minimal as possible.

Ground movement: Ground movement such as freezing of subsoil will not impair the stability of the building.

The Party Wall etc. Act 1996 also controls walls and foundations being built near to existing buildings. However, it is 'civil

Fire safety in residential buildings

New improvements to fire safety guidance and building regulations to ensure tall buildings are made safer in England were recently introduced as part of a wider package of reforms.

The changes meet recommendations from Phase One of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and will strengthen the information available to fire and rescue services.

All new residential buildings over 11m will now have to include a Secure Information Box that will give fire and rescue services access to important details about a building in the event of a fire.

New residential developments over 18m will also have to incorporate an Evacuation Alert System to help fire and rescue services inform residents of a change in evacuation strategy, during an incident. This will give fire and rescue services an additional tool to use on the ground, alongside existing methods of evacuation.

It forms part of a wider update to tighten building regulations and provide clearer fire safety rules for the design or construction of residential developments.

The government previously announced a ban on the use of combustible materials in and on the external walls of new blocks of flats over 18m, in England – as well as hospitals, student accommodation and dormitories in boarding schools. This ban has now been extended to include new hotels, hostels and boarding houses of this height.

These changes will also ban Metal Composite Material panels with unmodified polyethylene core, known as MCM PE, on all new buildings at any height. This follows research carried out by the government and evidence heard at the Grenfell Tower Inquiry on the serious fire safety risks associated with this material.

New statutory guidance has been introduced to restrict the combustibility of materials used in and on the external walls of residential buildings, between 11-18m in height.

This will mean that lower risk developments between 11-18m meet necessary safety standards – while allowing designers and developers flexibility to use environmentally friendly materials. It builds on a provision, that the government has already introduced, for sprinkler systems to be installed in new blocks of flats 11m and over, in England.

Other updates to Part B of the building regulations being put forward include:

- Elements of solar shading devices to be included within the scope of the ban
- Amend the list of materials exempt from the ban to include fibre optic cables and insulation materials 300mm from ground level
- Update the requirement of the ban to refer to the latest version of the British Standard classification for materials used on high-rise residential buildings
- Temporarily exempt cavity trays
- Amend the requirements for material change of use in buildings.

law' and is not enforced by local authority building control (see page 18-19 for further information on party walls).

Part B: Fire safety

Fire safety should be a major factor in the design and layout of all property conversions. Key aspects of Part B include:

Safe means of escape from the building: This requires the provision of main-wired smoke and fire alarm warning systems. It may also include additional features including fire doors, smoke ventilation or sprinkler systems (All new dwellings in Wales, including those formed by change of use, will require a domestic fire suppression system such as sprinklers). In larger conversions this may also include additional staircases.

The stability of a building to be maintained in a fire, both internally and externally

Internally: The wall lining, that is plaster, plasterboard or wooden boards on the walls and ceiling, will resist the spread of flames and give off reasonable levels of heat, if on fire; internal stability will be maintained during fire and fire spread will be prohibited; and fire and smoke will be prohibited from spreading to concealed spaces in a buildings structure.

Externally: The external walls and roof will resist spread of fire to walls and roofs of other buildings.

Finally, the conversion design should not inhibit access for fire crews in the event of a fire. The building should be easily accessible for fire fighters and their equipment.

Part C: Site preparation and damp proofing

Part C provides instruction on resistance to contaminants and moisture, including ensuring buildings are protected from both weather and water damage, from dangerous substances such as radon and methane, and that guidelines are followed when preparing a site for construction to take place.

These particularly apply when converting former industrial buildings or buildings in certain agricultural areas. Some areas of the country are contaminated by radon

gas within the subsoil, and measures may be required to limit the passage of this radioactive gas into the building.

Guidance is also provided in Part C on preparing a building site and its foundations for construction, detailing precautions that must be taken in advance. Steps must be taken to guarantee new building foundations will not be damaged by pre-existing foundations, vegetation, tree roots or topsoil. Ground moisture must be contained and removed, using suitable drainage pipes to avert damage to buildings. Contaminated ground must be cleared in advance of any contaminants, adhering to health and safety procedures.

The key elements of Part C which will apply for converting to residential use can be summarised thus:

- Nothing should be growing on the ground covered by the building
- Precautions must be taken to stop gases and dangerous substances from previous land use from entering the building and endangering the health and safety of occupants;
- Subsoil drainage will be in place, if needed, to stop the passage of ground moisture to the interior of the building and to prevent damage to the fabric of the building;
- The walls, floors and roof of the building shall prevent moisture passing to the inside of the building. The building must have provision to prevent condensation occurring in the roof structure.

Part D: Toxic substances

Some insulating materials inserted into (existing) cavity walls can give off toxic fumes. Preventative measures must be taken to stop these fumes reaching occupants of the building. However, Part D is now largely obsolete as injected materials are now mostly blown chopped fiber and not mixed on-site 'chemical reaction'-based methods.

Part E: Soundproofing

Part E requires that separating floors and walls between domestic dwellings are meet a minimum sound insulation performance standard. This applies to both new 'purpose built' and converted 'material change of use' properties.

There are two types of noise transmission, airborne sounds such as shouting or loud music, and impact sound, which is caused by objects hitting a surface, such as footsteps on the floor above. Noise is measured in decibels (dB) and for residential conversions the ideal for airborne sound is maximum 43dB, while the ideal for impact sound should be 64dB or lower.

FEDERATION OF MASTER BUILDERS
fmb.org.uk

Looking for a builder?

Choose a Master Builder and build with confidence

At the Federation of Master Builders, we connect clients with quality, local builders they can trust. Our members are:

- **Independently inspected and vetted** on joining to ensure they meet our high standards
- Able to provide a **written contract** for every job, and are committed to abide by the **FMB Code of Conduct**
- Able to offer an **FMB Insurance warranty** for every job (also available to homeowners directly)

Use our Find a Builder tool to start your search today:
www.fmb.org.uk/bcc-fab

Become a Master Builder

To find out how FMB membership can make a difference to you and your building company, visit:
www.fmb.org.uk/bcc-join

@fmbuilders

@federationofmasterbuilders

Projects delivered by: Atlantic Construction (dining space), Sporn Construction (facade), Convert Construction (extension) and MCK Construction (bathroom)

New internal walls and floors within dwelling-houses, flats and rooms for residential purposes, whether purpose built or formed by material change of use should achieve a minimum performance of 40 dB.

New conversion dwellings need to be soundproofed to all separating walls, floors/ceilings and stairs between dwellings and to common areas. While it's not essential to soundproof dividing elements between different living spaces within dwellings (other than bedrooms and floors), new 'bedsit' rooms for residential purposes, HMOs, hotel/hostel accommodation etc. should have their separating walls and floors soundproofed.

Party walls separating dwellings need to achieve a minimum 43dB value for airborne sound insulation. Special care must be taken to tightly seal holes around services - pipes and cables – otherwise they will create pathways for sound transmission.

Ensuring compliance with Part E can be problematic, particularly if you only have access to one side of the wall or floor. In most cases the party walls and floors will need to be sound tested by a specialist at completion.

Pre-completion sound tests are required to ensure compliance with Part E, unless the Robust Details approach is adopted.

Testing needs to be undertaken by a UKAS registered test organisation or European equivalent (e.g. ANC). A list of preferred ANC accredited companies can be found at www.association-of-noise-consultants.co.uk.

Considering the requirements relating to sound insulation at an early stage of any development reduces the likelihood of costly remediation measures and delays at completion. Getting this right is important because failing the test will mean having to carry out remedial works and re-testing it to achieve compliance. Without this the property can't be officially 'signed off' by your local authority building control team as 'completed'.

Soundproofing materials: Thick, dense materials such as mineral wool quilt provide good insulation properties and offer effective acoustic insulation solutions. Some plasterboard products will be soundproof rated while there are lots of acoustic quilts and foams on the market which can effectively reduce sound transfer.

Historic buildings: Soundproofing historic or listed buildings can be difficult and may compromise the need to conserve a building's historical characteristics and features. Part E recognises this and allows for special dispensation to improve sound insulation "to the extent that it is practically possible... provided that the work does not prejudice the character of the historic building, or increase the risk of long-term deterioration to the building fabric or fittings". However, designs will still need to show that everything possible has been done to exclude noise transmission.

Part F: Ventilation

Part F requires that the building should be adequately ventilated to provide a healthy and comfortable environment, whilst protecting against the risk of airborne pollution. Standards for ventilation and air quality requirements are included in this part of the building regulations.

Due to the increasing complexity of the regulations, ventilation strategies and system design must be considered at the earliest stages of building design.

The building regulations consider three ventilation types:

- 'Whole building' ventilation to provide fresh air to dilute and disperse low levels of water vapour and other pollutants, usually by the provision of background ventilators or mechanical supply ventilation.
- 'Local extract' ventilation in rooms where most water vapour or concentrated pollutants are released, usually by

mechanical means such as extract fans. Extractor fans fitted in kitchens should be capable of shifting 60 litres of air per second. For bathrooms, it's 15 litres per second and 30 litres per second in utility rooms.

- 'Purge' ventilation for the rapid dilution and removal of high concentrations of pollutants from occasional activities, usually by opening windows.

All new habitable rooms will need to be sufficiently ventilated. Generally this is achieved by providing an opening window or roof light equivalent to at least 1/20th of the floor area of the room with a 'trickle' vent at high level. In bath or shower rooms without opening windows extractor fans will need to be fitted. These should be triggered by the light switch with overrun timers that allow the fan to remain on after the light is turned out.

Where natural ventilation through windows is not practical a mechanical ventilation system will need to be installed, but these will need to be approved by your local authority building control team. If you are converting an entire building it might make more sense to install mechanical ventilation systems that controls ventilation for each new dwelling.

A recent uplift to Building Regulations Part F introduces a new requirement that when energy efficiency work is done in buildings, the ventilation is not made any worse, in line with existing measures for controlled services and fittings. This includes a recommendation that replacement windows are fitted with a background trickle ventilator, unless it can be proven that the ventilation was not made worse.

The new rules are designed to make it easier to understand the impact of ventilation and includes the introduction of mandated checklists for the installation of mechanical ventilation products together with guidance on why ventilation is important. (For more details about recent changes to Building Regulation, see article (Fit for the Future) on page 32).

Part G: Hygiene

This part of the building regulations require that there is provision for:

- Adequate sanitation facilities, ie a toilet
- A house must have either a bath or shower with ability to heat hot water

Where dwellings exist in the building for the first time they must meet new water efficiency standards. These apply to:

- Sanitary conveniences and washing facilities
- Bathrooms
- Kitchen and food preparation areas

Key requirements include measures to limit water consumption by careful selection of taps, showers etc. (no more than 125 litres of water per person, per day, but this can be lower in some areas). Also, baths need to be fitted with protective thermostatic mixing values to prevent scalding.

Part H: Drainage and waste disposal

The key requirements of Part H require the following:

- An adequate system to carry water used for cooking, washing, toilet, bath or shower to a sewer cesspool or settlement tank must be in place
- A cesspool or settlement tank must be impermeable to liquids and have adequate ventilation. It should not harm the health of any person and not contaminate water or water supply. There should also be the means of access for emptying
- An adequate system to carry rainwater away from the roof of a building. For example, guttering carrying water to a sewer
- A place to put a wheelie bin or dustbin.

Provision must exist for adequate drainage systems. Existing drains, septic tanks etc.

may need surveying to ensure they are in suitable condition for re-use. When planning the layout of the converted building consider where drainage runs will be provided. This is important to ensure the internal routes are viable in terms of fire and sound protection, and that all drainage routes will have suitable falls.

Part J: Heating appliances

Part J covers the construction, installation and commissioning of boilers, chimneys, flues, hearths and fuel storage installations. Solid fuel stoves are becoming increasingly popular, but developers need to be aware that there are many detailed technical requirements to follow to ensure they are safely installed which involve strict commissioning procedures at the end of the job.

Any heating appliances, boilers or similar devices must work safely, efficiently and be provided with sufficient air supply to burn correctly, protecting against the risk of pollution and ill health, whilst associated chimneys or flues must be safe to use and protect the building and fuel storage from a risk of fire.

Building owners and users need to be given information regarding the safe use of the appliances, flues and equipment. Developers should take particular care with chimney positions so that floors are suitably robust to support structural hearths, and that appliances and flues are adequately vented and sited away from combustible material. Where solid fuel appliances are installed in dwellings, a carbon monoxide detector must be fitted.

Part K: Stairs, ramps and guards

The main elements of Part K can be summarised as:

- Stairs, ramps and ladders shall provide safety for people, when moving between different levels of a building
- Stairs, ramps, floors and balconies shall be adequately guarded to prevent falling

Also included are pedestrian and vehicle barriers, and requirements to prevent injury from (opening) doors and windows.

Part K also includes safety requirements relating to the use, operation, and cleaning of windows as well as safety requirements for automatic doors, barriers, shutters and gates.

Part K now incorporates Part N of the building regulations which requires that glazing should, if broken, break in a way unlikely to cause injury, resist impact without breaking or be shielded or protected from impact.

Windows that can be opened must be operated safely and provision made for safe accessible cleaning. It also sets minimum requirements for the provision of safety glazing to protect against impact hazards, and providing warning markings on large panes of glass. Where existing stairs exist they are not required to be replaced in domestic conversions, but newly constructed stairs must be compliant.

Part L: Conservation of fuel and power

The guiding principle of Part L within any converted premises is that the building and services must promote the conservation of fuel and power, whilst reducing the amount of CO_2 produced. The fabric of the building must contain insulation to limit heat loss, heating appliances, associated equipment and lighting systems must prevent wasted energy use, whilst pipes and storage vessels are insulated to reduce the waste of energy.

Part L controls the insulation values of building elements, the allowable area of windows, doors and other openings, air permeability of the structure, the heating efficiency of boilers and the insulation and controls for heating appliances and systems together with hot water storage and lighting efficiency. It also sets out the requirements for SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) calculations and carbon emission targets for dwellings.

Part L1B of the building regulations covers the conversion forming dwellings as well as upgrading existing dwellings. Where you are carrying out a material change of use, there is an obligation to upgrade the building's thermal efficiency by upgrading the walls, floors and roof insulation. A different requirement is triggered where any element of the construction is replaced or added to. This applies where the work covers more than half of the total area of the individual element or 25% of the total area of the building's envelope. So, for example, if you are re-plastering a wall, the insulation of that wall should be upgraded to a reasonable standard.

Heat loss and thermal efficiency: On all conversion projects, special attention should be paid to airtightness by ensuring all gaps are sealed. Excessive air leakage will result in cold draughty buildings and an increase in energy consumption.

Insulation or thermal efficiency works which apply on conversion projects might include the following:

Doors and windows: Fitting new, high performance doors windows can cut heat loss through windows by half, making the property more comfortable and easier to heat. Doors and windows combined account for around 25% of the building's total heat loss, and are classed as 'controlled fittings' in the building regulations.

Replacement doors are now required to provide a minimum U-value of 1.4 W/m_2K which normally requires insulated cores and high performance double glazing. A window's energy rating will be somewhere between C-A++. Under new building regulations introduced in June 2022 the lowest rated window that an installer is allowed to fit is B, or a minimum whole window U-value of 1.4 W/mK,.with A++ the highest rating currently available (see article on page 31 for more details).

In most cases installation work will be carried out by registered installers who can 'self-certify' the work complies with the building regulations.

Cavity wall insulation

Fitting cavity wall insulation could reduce heating costs by more than a third. Filling the gap between the two walls of a house with an insulating material massively decreases the amount of heat which escapes through the walls. Most cavity walls can be insulated with mineral wool or polystyrene beads. These are the most common materials, and the cheapest, but they're only suitable for cavities that meet certain criteria.

However, not every conversion project is going to be suitable. There may not be a cavity to fill, or you may have a cavity that isn't suitable for insulating. A lot of

Fit for the future

New homes in England will have to produce significantly less CO_2 under new rules announced by the government.

The changes to the building regulations, which came into effect in June 2022, aim to reduce CO_2 emissions from new build homes by 31% compared to previous standards, and will affect everyone undertaking home improvement projects including extensions, renovations, conversions and self build.

The changes comprise uplifts to Parts L and F of the Building Regulations which seek to balance the need for carbon reductions with improved ventilation in homes, and the introduction of two new regulations: Part O, which looks at overheating, and Part S, which focuses on the infrastructure for charging electric vehicles.

New minimum energy efficiency standards have a been introduced; the new U-value for walls will be 0.18W/m², 1.4 (Window Energy Rating Band B) for windows and rooflights, and 1.4 for doors. There are also recommendations for all new windows to be fitted with trickle vents, unless there is an alternative form of ventilation, such as air bricks or whole house Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR).

The changes have also set new minimum energy efficiency standards for heating systems, including 92% ErP for gas boilers and a SCOP of 3.0 for heat pumps. They also require heating systems to be designed to operate at a low flow temperature of 55°C (compared to the standard 80°C)

The uplift to Building Regulations Part F should make it easier to understand the impact of ventilation in a home. Mandated checklists for the installation of mechanical ventilation products will also come with guidance on why ventilation is important.

The new Part O looks at mitigating solar gain (heating due to direct sunlight) but also other causes of overheating due to uninsulated heating pipes, cylinders or lack of heating system controls. This includes the introduction of new glazing limits as well as the levels of cross-ventilation required to remove excess heat.

The Government has also introduced Part S: Infrastructure for charging electric vehicles. As the use of electric vehicles increases, this new regulation ensures electric car charge points are properly planned and installed.

While the amended regulations and the new Approved Documents came into force on 15 June 2022, the government has stipulated transitional arrangements to support businesses and homeowners with compliance. If a building notice or full plans for building work were submitted to a local authority before 15 June 2022, then provided the building work commences by 15 June 2023, work on that individual building is permitted to continue under the previous standards.

The changes to the building regulations are designed to raise standards and are an important step towards a cleaner, greener built environment, paving the way for the Future Homes and Buildings Standard in 2025, which will mean all future homes are net zero ready and will not need retrofitting.

conversion projects will involve renovating older buildings and most buildings constructed before 1920 will have solid walls – that is, the walls are made of brick or stone with no gap or cavity in the middle. Solid walls lose even more heat than cavity walls; the only way to reduce this heat loss is to insulate them on the inside or the outside.

There are two types of solid wall insulation: external and internal. External insulation involves adding a decorative weather-proof insulating treatment of between 50-100mm to the outside of the wall. Internal insulation solutions for solid walls include ready-made insulation/plaster board laminates or wooden battens in-filled with insulation or flexible linings, typically to a total thickness of up to 90mm.

Where a solid wall has been upgraded by the installation of insulation, it must meet the minimum energy efficiency values set out in the building regulations.

Floor insulation: Timber floors can be insulated by lifting the floorboards and laying mineral wool insulation supported by netting between the joists.

Heating and hot water: Using a high efficiency condensing boiler with heating controls will save on heating costs for building users. It will also significantly cut carbon emissions as boilers account for around 60 per cent of all domestic CO_2 emissions. As the current lifespan of a boiler is around 15 years, choosing a heating system with a high efficiency condensing boiler with the correct heating controls can make a huge difference.

You might want to consider renewable energy or other eco-friendly technologies (see below) in your conversion. Before you consider the details you should also consider design, location, orientation, shading and fabric of your property as these have a huge impact, particularly on the need for any mechanical heating/cooling system.

Draught proofing: In a typical home, 20% of all heat loss is through poor ventilation and draughts. Draught proofing simply fills gaps and decreases the amount of cold air entering. There are several types of materials available from brushes, foams and sealants to strips and shaped rubber or plastic. You can also use a regular tube sealant, such as silicon to fill gaps between floorboards and skirting boards to stop draughts. A note of warning, however - don't block underfloor airbricks in outside walls as floorboards will rot without adequate ventilation.

Eco technologies

Depending on the conversion type, you may wish to add some renewable energy options to supplement traditional energy sources. This could include solar panels (some produce hot water, whereas photovoltaic generate electricity), air and ground source heat pumps or generators, wood pellet/ biomass boilers, log burners, wind and water turbines, and mini domestic combined heat and power (CHP) generators. You may also be interested in mechanical ventilation and heat recovery systems (MVHR), the latest generation of super-efficient gas boilers and smart control systems, low energy lighting and using energy efficient domestic appliances.

Lighting: It makes sense to fit the most energy efficient replacement bulbs possible to help reduce energy consumption. LED bulbs are the best option because they're highly energy efficient. Although relatively expensive to buy, LEDs produce a negligible amount of heat and consume a fraction of the energy used by conventional bulbs and last up to 20 times longer – about 50,000 hours.

Underfloor heating: The most efficient means of delivering heat to a room is from the floor upwards. Hence underfloor heating (UHF) has the advantage that it requires much lower temperatures than radiator systems to achieve the same degree of thermal comfort.

UFH is claimed to offer between 15-30 per cent greater efficiency over conventional central heating, plus there's the added benefit of freeing up wall space with no bulky radiators. The main type of UFH uses warm water pumped through plastic pipes laid in floor screeds over special insulation boards. However, retrofitting UFH will be impractical on some conversions because of the enormous amount of upheaval excavating floors.

Even with a modest budget, thermal insulation should remain a priority and will ensure heat generated isn't lost. A well-insulated conversion will cost less to heat, cutting out the need for expensive heating systems to keep future occupants warm.

Part M: Access and facilities for people with disabilities

Part M requires the inclusive provision of ease of access to and circulation within all buildings, together with requirements for facilities for disabled people. In Part M, 'people with disabilities' means people who have an impairment which limits their ability to walk or which requires them to use a wheelchair for mobility or have impaired hearing or sight.

Buildings should have reasonable provision:

- For all people to gain access and use the building.
- Toilets provision shall be made available for all.

Part M was written to ensure that the design of a building does not create physical barriers to a building's inclusive use, over its lifetime. It is particularly relevant when new dwellings are created and where such properties must comply, while the conversion of an existing building must not remove or reduce existing accessibility features.

If in any doubt as to whether your conversion will be affected by Part M, the local authority building control team will be able to assist further.

Part O: Standards for overheating in new residential buildings

Part O is a new set of rules covering overheating in residential buildings that focus on mitigating solar gain (heating due to direct sunlight) but also other causes of overheating due to uninsulated heating pipes, cylinders or lack of heating system controls.

All new residential buildings, including homes, care homes, student accommodation and children's homes, must now designed to reduce overheating, making sure they are fit for the future and protect the most vulnerable people. Part O sets standards based on whether the house or residential unit is cross-ventilated, considers orientation and introduces a standard for the maximum amount of glazing allowed in a single room. The guidance includes acceptable strategies for limiting unwanted solar gain in the summer through shading and other means.

It splits England into areas of 'moderate risk' and 'high risk' of overheating, the latter including urban and some suburban parts of London. Part O also includes measures to ensure overheating strategies are safe and usable by occupants, taking into account noise and pollution near the home, as well as the safety and usability of the windows and security, which may affect occupant behaviour. Part O also stipulates Information on overheating strategies must be passed to the building owner in the form of a Home User Guide.

Part P: Electrical safety

This regulation covers electrical installations in and around dwellings. It requires that reasonable provision shall be made in the design, installation, inspection and testing of electrical installations in and around dwellings in order to protect persons from fire or injury.

For these reasons, most developers will contract out this part of the project. Engaging a qualified professional for electrical work not only gives peace of mind but also a fall back should anything go wrong.

Developers can demonstrate that electrical work is compliant with Part P by using an installer who is a member of an electrical installations competent person self-certification scheme. More information about finding an electrician is available on page XX 41.

When the work is finished you should receive:

- An Electrical Installation Certificate or, where applicable, a Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificate that confirms the work meets BS 7671; and
- A Building Regulations Compliance Certificate that confirms the work meets the Building Regulations.

Another choice is to use an electrician who is registered with a trade body, such as NICEIC, ECA or NAPIT, but who is not a member of a competent person self-certification scheme. These contractors will be qualified to design, install, test and issue certification to BS 7671.

Their work is checked and certified by building control as part of the building regulations application.

For more information about competent person schemes, see page 77.

Part Q

Part Q of the building regulations requires that easily accessible doors and windows (those within 2m of access level or above a single-storey roof) should be replaced with a secure type on new build or domestic change of use projects. This will usually require that those windows or doors are replaced with a modern, secure unit meeting BS PAS 24 or a similar standard.

Where the building is listed, historic, or in a conservation area, make sure you discuss this issue with the conservation officer and your local authority building control team before works commence.

Part R

Part R relates to the physical infrastructure required for communications networks.

Where a building is erected or work consists of major renovation works, there is a requirement to provide physical infrastructure, up to a network termination point for high speed communication networks, e.g. broadband.

A multi-dwelling building should have a common access point, and dedicated vertical and horizontal service routes, so that service providers can make connections from the access point to the network termination point in each dwelling.

Part S: Infrastructure for charging electric vehicles

The new Approved Document S requires all domestic new builds to have the preparatory work completed for the future installation of an electric vehicle charge point.

It aims to ensure that infrastructure will keep up as consumers and manufacturers move towards electric vehicles.

Approved Document S applies to new residential and non-residential buildings; buildings undergoing a material change of use to dwellings; residential and non-residential buildings undergoing major renovation; and mixed-use buildings that are either new, or undergoing major renovation.

Generally, for new residential developments, a charge point is required for each parking space, with some exceptions. Where no associated parking spaces are provided, there is no requirement to install a charge point.

The EV charge points being installed will need to provide a minimum of 7kW to an untethered charger, or have the cable routes ready for this supply. There is a cost cap of £3,600 on average for all work involved in installed EV points. If the cost exceeds this amount, then developers need only install the cable routes. Where the cost of EV charge points is more than 7% of the total cost of a major renovation, there is no requirement to install either charge points,

or the cable routes, if the cost of the cable routes is more than 7%.

Approved Document S came into effect on 15 June 2022, but does not apply to works where an initial notice was registered before 15 June 2022, provided the work starts before 15 June 2023.

Regulation 7: Materials and workmanship

This Approved Document gives guidance on how to comply with Regulation 7 of the Building Regulations.

Regulation 7 stipulates that building work shall be carried out with adequate and proper materials which are appropriate for the circumstances in which they are used, are adequately mixed or prepared, and are applied, used, or fixed adequately to perform the functions for which they are designed, and in a workmanlike manner.

Regulation 7 was revised in 2018 following the Grenfell Tower fire, following a decision to ban combustible materials in the cladding for buildings over 18m in height. More recently the government has banned unsafe MCM PE cladding panels on all buildings and promised stronger safety standards for the use of combustible materials on external walls (see article on page 23 for more details).

APEX WINDOW SERVICES



We manufacture, supply and install:

- upvc windows and doors
- porches
- conservatories
- composite doors
- patios



We also carry out:

- repairs
- glass replacement
- free estimates

Assure Certification



T: 07738 880179
E: apexwindowservices1@gmail.com

NEB SCAFFOLDING

Engaging professionals

For any conversion, one of the first steps will be to organise your ideas into a design 'brief'. In the first instance, the design brief should focus on the functions that need to be performed in the conversion. This helps keep options open during the design process and avoids leaping to conclusions before requirements have been properly assessed.

The brief might include information about:

- The overall context for the project
- The budget. Whatever your budget, include a healthy contingency of at least 10 per cent of costs. Even the most meticulously planned projects often need more support than originally costed for
- The programme and any key dates
- The functions that the converted building will be required to accommodate
- The qualities that will be required from the project, and their relative priority
- Any comparable facilities that might act as a benchmark

FREE NO OBLIGATION CONSULTATION
www.studio91architecture.co.uk
email: info@studio91architecture.co.uk
tel: 07305 646 815
studio 91 architecture


EXTENSIONS - CONVERSIONS - NEW BUILD HOUSES
FEASIBILITY - PLANNING - BUILDING REGULATIONS

NX SCAFFOLDING

- Any specific sizes, relationships or other spatial requirements
- Any functions that require privacy, separation or connection
- Any particular technical requirements
- Specific inclusions and exclusions
- Initial assumptions about the likely procurement strategy and organisation of the project
- Assumptions about durability, lifespan and maintenance requirements
- Internal thermal, ventilation, acoustic and lighting conditions
- Requirements for sustainability.

It's helpful to consult an architect or designer at an early stage on what is most appropriate or feasible in relation to your circumstances; they'll also advise you on what's affordable, based on your budget.

Arranging for your architect to view your property before you purchase will help make sure you're aware of any significant costs or issues up front.

You architect or designer can also make applications for planning permission and building regulations approval on your behalf and liaise with the other professionals such as planning consultants and structural engineers, bringing the whole package together for you.

It's important that everyone involved in the project is very clear about what the finished project will look like and how it will perform. A good design brief will strike a balance between what you want from your conversion with what the planners want, and between regulatory requirements for the build and what is going to be realistically achievable within the budget.

Appointing an architect/designer

Having a professional architect or designer on board for any sizeable conversion scheme is always worth the additional cost. These professionals are up to date with current rules and regulations and a good one will invariably help you to achieve your project to the best specification and design for your budget.

Architects are tailor-made to provide support for conversion projects. While you'll certainly need the specialised skills of other professions along the way, architects' training in the UK gives them the holistic expertise to assist at every stage of a project, from conception through to completion and beyond.

From the outset of your project, an architect can talk you through ideas that you may not have thought about before, as well as the early-stage considerations such as build types, plots, orientation and energy efficiency. When planning your project, they can prepare feasibility studies for you, assess your options and identify possible constraints.

Procurement is another area an architect can assist with, as well as identifying and evaluating the other contractors who'll need to be engaged on the project. In addition to producing conceptual and technical designs, your architect can support you through building regulations and planning applications. They can also administer the building contract once you reach the construction stage and provide you with the required certification when you reach completion.

Appointing a project manager

Do not underestimate the time that needs to be devoted to a conversion project. The construction stage in particular can be very time consuming and benefits from experience.

You could appoint a separate project manager to manage the build process for you, particularly if you are not choosing to work with a main contractor. This could be your architect/designer or a third party. This will take away a lot of the hassle as he or she would be in charge of liaising with all the different tradesmen who need to be involved, ordering materials and also liaising with professionals, for things such as water and electricity connections and ensuring that building control surveyors are able to carry out site inspections at the appropriate time.

If you do engage a project manager, as the developer you will still need to make decisions on key aspects of the build

and you should continue to monitor progress to make sure that your conversion is being built as you'd intended.

The fee you will have to pay your architect or a separate project manager in this situation will be higher than if a main contractor is appointed, but there would normally be a corresponding saving in the payments made to the building contractors. You should make sure you try to agree any separate project management costs upfront.

If you're appointing a separate project manager, you should speak to several firms to find someone you can trust and get on well with. Make sure you're as clear as possible about your plans because if you change your plans later on this could cause delays and/or lead to increases in the costs.

Your project manager should have recognised qualifications in a construction discipline (eg. HND, BSc, MSc, etc.), be experienced in managing builders, tradesmen and logistics (ask for his/her CV) and, ideally, belong to a professional institution (eg. RIBA, RICS, APM, ICE, etc.). Ideally, your project manager should be relatively local, with good knowledge of local tradesmen, builders, builders' merchants, etc. so they can be on site regularly and can meet tradesmen and professionals face to face.

Where can I get more help?

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has a free referral service which will help identify suitable architects near to you.

Similar design services are also available from the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists. If you are seeking a surveyor, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) can assist, and for structural engineering advice, The Institution of Structural Engineers is a good starting point.

If you're looking to engage a local project manager, the RIBA, the RICS, the Institute of Clerk of Works or the Institution of Civil Engineers can all offer advice on potential suitably qualified project managers in your area.

Website links for all the above organisations can be found below:

Royal Institute of British Architects:
https://www.architecture.com

Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists:
https://architecturaltechnology.com

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors:
https://www.rics.org/uk

Institute of Clerk of Works:
https://www.icwci.org

The Institution of Structural Engineers:
https://www.istructe.org

Institution of Civil Engineers:
https://www.ice.org.uk

Finding a good builder

Once you have finalised the details of your conversion project and are happy with your knowledge of the construction process going forward, you will have to make one of your most important decisions – who will carry out the building works. Finding a reputable builder is going to be key to the overall success of your project.

If you're prepared to undertake some background research, tracking down a professional builder should not be too difficult, although you may have to wait a while before they can start – a good builder will always be busy and often have jobs lined up months in advance.

Online trade directories can be a useful resource for finding local builders, but the wide choice can be confusing, so it's worth checking builders' websites for further information, previous work, testimonials etc.

Trade association websites can be another good source for finding professional builders. The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) is perhaps the most well-known trade

Finding an electrician

A good place to start searching for someone to undertake electrical work for your conversion is via the registered competent person online electrical search facility: http://www.electricalcompetentperson.co.uk/Choosing-An-Electrician

All registered electricians listed on this database are authorised to self-certify their work is compliant with the building regulations. It also means they have met strict entry requirements set by their scheme operator to ensure they meet the correct standards.

Once you have found your electrician, the scheme offers the following advice:

- Before work commences, agree in writing costs, payment terms and the timetable of work, including expected completion date. This should be signed by both parties.
- If any modifications are required during works, confirm this in writing and ask for a revised quote before any changes are made.
- Try to avoid paying for services in cash and always request a receipt or statement of account.
- You should raise any concerns you may have with the electrician, or their supervisor/manager, straight away, stating exactly what you are concerned or unhappy about and what you want done, to give the electrician a chance to rectify the problem. If the situation is not resolved, you should contact the operator of the competent person scheme they belong to.
- The electrician should always provide you with an electrical installation certificate on completion, no matter how big or small the job may be, which shows the work was that carried out meets the British Standard for electrical safety, BS7671.
- For any work that is notifiable under the building regulations, you should also receive a certificate to confirm the work meets the relevant building regulations.

association in the building industry. As well as having their references checked, new members are expected to uphold certain standards and follow a code of conduct.

It's also worth checking out the Guild of Builders and Contractors, as builders who apply to be 'trusted members' have to show that they've been trading for three years and supply financial references. Every member also agrees to provide written contracts and clear payment plans.

Being a member of the National Federation of Builders is an equally good sign. Members are expected to adhere to a code of conduct, as well as supplying references, so membership is a good sign that your builder is competent. The NFB also operates a complaints procedure and all members are covered by public liability insurance.

Warning signs

You should be cautious with builders that can either start straight away or submit extremely low bids, as they may cut corners or add extra charges once your project is underway.

Whichever method you use to look for your ideal builder, it is worth getting at least three quotes before you make any decisions. Make sure that every quote includes materials, labour, timeframes, responsibilities, including all subcontracting, and of course, VAT.

Never pay all the money for a job up front. Set up an agreed payment schedule and only pay the final amount when you are satisfied that the work has been completed to a satisfactory standard. You will save yourself a lot of hassle in the long run by agreeing to a contract in writing. This will avoid any unexpected costs cropping up at the end of the project.

Other tradespeople are also a good source of advice, as they should have access to a network of local builders. Alternatively, your local authority building control team might be able to steer you in the right direction.

Common conversion challenges

Successfully converting any property will require careful planning and the design will have to comply with the building regulations in a number of ways. A lot will depend on the building you are starting with.

A disused warehouse, for example, will present different challenges to subdividing a large town house into flats. However, there are a number of issues and challenges which are common to most conversions, and these are summarised below.

Subdividing spaces

Many conversion projects will involve dividing a large property into smaller, separate units. Engaging design professionals at an early stage will ensure the best use of space in terms of layout and natural light, while retaining any attractive features. All new habitable rooms, such as living rooms and bedrooms, should have at least one external window. Inserting a new wall to create a new room will need to meet the fire safety, thermal separation and soundproofing requirements as stipulated in the buildings regulations, while care must be taken not to make any other existing matters, such as ventilation, worse.

Fire regulations

Compliance with fire regulations is one of the most important design factors to consider

when converting a building, and particularly, when subdividing a property into separate flats. There are two aspects to be considered regarding fire safety: fire separation of the units and the provision of a safe means of escape.

One of the main pillars of the building regulations is to ensure people have the means to escape in the event of fire. Rooms that do not open directly onto a hall, and all first floor habitable rooms in a two-storey property should have a window or door that is large enough for people to escape through in the event of a fire. These must have a clear opening of at least 0.33m2 and measure at least 450mmx450mm. Mains-operated smoke detection systems should be installed throughout.

Soundproofing

Dealing with noise is another fundamental aspect of design which will apply to all conversions. Soundproof linings need to be incorporated into wall linings, ceilings and floors.

Thermal efficiency

Thermal efficiency standards under Part L of the building regulations are increasingly demanding and remain an essential requirement for all conversions. Critical medium and long term details, such as thermal performance, and water and energy efficiency, are often overlooked by developers to achieve a quick turnover that conceals problems and passes them on to the new owner. Achieving the required standards can be difficult (and costly) in many older buildings, particularly when the historic fabric of the building needs to be conserved.

Services

One benefit of converting existing properties is more often than not the main services are already in place. However, they may not be in good condition and will often need replacing or updating. If converting into flats, each unit will need a new mains supply fitted.

Financial risks

One of the biggest risks for any developer is purchasing a property that does not have planning permission. Although it will be significantly cheaper, you could end up with a property you can't sell if planning permission isn't granted.

Proceeding with such a property is taking a risk that the vendor did not consider worthwhile. Sometimes an option can be agreed by which a deposit, say 10 per cent, secures the right for the developer to buy the building at a certain price once planning permission has been obtained by the purchaser. The deposit is retained by the seller in the event of failure within an agreed timeframe.

The seller on the other hand might negotiate an extra payment if more units or square footage of building are put on the site than was assumed in an outline planning consent.

Building regulations

For any substantial development a 'full plans' application to your local authority building control department should be made.

This will demonstrate in advance that the design fully complies with the building regulations and allow the contractors to work to 'approved plans'. The danger with taking the shortcut route of making a 'building notice' application is that if a site inspection later discovers that part of the work doesn't comply it will need to be taken down and re-done, with a lot of added expense and hassle.

Developers should note that unless the completed project only consists of dwellings (without communal corridors, stairs etc) the building notice procedure cannot be used.

Environmental Health

As well as planning and building regulations, if you are planning to convert a property that

will be let as a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), or for use with any type of food preparation, you will also need to comply with Environmental Health legislation.

Other issues that need to be taken into account include:

- Design – Some original buildings, such as pubs, mills and offices, may not be suitable for conversion simply because of their size and shape.
- Financial viability – Would-be converters will need to assess the financial viability of a project which will involve comparing the cost of the property and how much it will cost to convert against the value of the completed homes.
- Legal issues – Important legislation, such as the Party Wall Act, can land unaware developers in serious trouble.
- Builder disputes – Disputes with builders are a well-known major source of financial grievance. This often boils down to not being clear at the outset about what work is required for a given price. So it's important to specify precisely what you want done before the job starts (an 'approved plan' and thorough technical specification helps here). This will also help you budget accurately so there are no nasty surprises. It's also advisable to pay in stages for completed work (don't pay up front) and to keep a contingency budget for any unexpected costs of at least 10 per cent.
- Financial incentives - With most types of conversion a reduced rate of 5 per cent VAT can apply. But if you are renovating or extending an existing dwelling the work will attract VAT at the full rate of 20 per cent. Where a dwelling has been left empty for at least two years a VAT registered builder may be able to charge VAT at a reduced rate of 5 per cent on their work. And for properties left empty for more than 10 years the full amount of VAT should be recoverable. This is a complex subject so specialist advice should be sought at the outset.

Condition reports

In many cases, buildings undergoing a conversion will have suffered years of neglect. So, before purchasing a property for conversion, it is wise to get a detailed assessment of the condition of the building. A surveyor should be commissioned to provide a building report identifying essential repairs or where further investigation might be needed. This will also help identify the type of construction used throughout the structure which can also provide a steer in terms of appropriate redesign and construction techniques.

Remember, a building will start deteriorating if it is left empty for more than a few months. This can rapidly accelerate if damp gets inside due to broken windows, slipped tiles, and so on. An empty property may also be susceptible to vandalism, trespassing and theft.

It is important therefore that a property is secured and made weathertight before work begins. Metal shutters can be rented, or sheets of plywood used to board up windows and doors. Waterproof sheets can be used to secure missing or damaged roof sections.

Buildings and public liability insurance cover may be required to protect against damage, fire, construction works, and so on.

For major conversion works, particularly where a property will be vacant for any length of time, make a point of notifying your insurers in writing in advance so they can't wriggle out of a claim should you need to make one.

Converting shops into flats

Many high street shops are suitable for conversion to flats, while some smaller premises can be redeveloped to make good family homes.

In many cases, the upper floors will already have accommodation attached. The key issues tend to relate to access, and with larger premises, the deeper floorplates, which can be challenging to reconfigure because of the lack of natural light. Where there is good access to the upper floors (often from the rear) it can facilitate planning. But one attraction of shop conversions is that they tend to be sited within reasonable proximity of transport links, in which case development may be acceptable without car parking provision.

Planning

Healthy and vibrant shops and businesses are vital to a local economy, helping help to support related social and cultural activities. Planning policies therefore are designed to support and promote designated shopping areas. The emphasis is on providing an appropriate mix of retail, commercial and leisure uses which provide a good choice of shops and services for shoppers and visitors.

Outside of these areas it may be appropriate to convert a shop into a house or flat, providing certain criteria are met, including:

- Character – The level of retail activity (including concentration and clustering) and the general nature of an area would be considered, and conversions that harm the character of the area will not be permitted.

- Community – The conversion would need to leave a reasonable range of shops within walking distance for local residents.
- Amenity – The quality of the living environment will be considered. Issues such as the level of activity both during the day and evening; noise; traffic congestion; proximity to a bus stop; and width of footway in relation to residential privacy will be used to determine whether ground floor living accommodation would be appropriate.

Changing a building from shop to residential use will normally require planning permission. However, if you are looking to convert the upper floors to just one or two flats, this can be done as 'permitted development'.

Planning permission will be required however if you are looking to create more than two flats or if you are planning to make external changes to the building, such as recladding, adding balconies or creating new car parking spaces.

A flood risk assessment is normally required for a change of use and this would form part of the planning application.

Design issues to consider

Once a conversion is considered acceptable in principle, the planning team will then look at the design of the conversion. Shops by their nature are usually in highly visible locations often on main routes, particularly corner shops. It is therefore essential that the design of the conversion is of the highest quality to ensure it makes a positive contribution to the street.

There are some key design principles that will lead to a visually successful conversion. As a general rule cornices, corbels and pilasters should be retained, particularly where the ground floor projects out from the upper floors. This will bring a natural divide between the old and the new, and reference the building's heritage.

Where an original shop front exists, its retention should be encouraged, in particular where it makes an important contribution to the character of the area. In these instances and where privacy is an issue, the lower section of the shop window could be covered by venetian blinds or obscured glass.

In order to achieve a balance in the building façade, it is important to relate the ground floor features with those above. Ground floor windows and doors should normally be aligned with upper windows, using centre lines and window edges. The shape and style of upper floor windows should be followed. Ground floor materials (such as brickwork) should be 'matched' to upper floors. Many brick suppliers provide a 'matching' service that can help you with this. The builder should also be instructed to follow the brick arrangement (usually referred to as bonding pattern) and mortaring style of upper floors.

Where there is more than one residential unit a decision may need to be made on whether to install one or two doors. Private entry for each unit is preferable however some facades are too narrow and will look out of balance with more than one door. Where this is the case, a single shared external door should be provided with internal private doors to each flat.

Corner buildings also provide a good opportunity to bring natural surveillance to the street and therefore should have ground floor windows on both elevations where possible. Your conversion should provide adequate internal and external space for residents.

It is important to consider how the new residents will store their rubbish. Poorly sited wheelie bins can spoil the appearance of the area and may block the footpath. Planning may refuse permission for conversions that have inappropriate refuse storage.

The privacy of residents should be also considered when drawing up proposals for a conversion. Where the shop has a forecourt,

the area should be separated from the pavement by a low wall or other appropriate boundary treatment and landscaped to create a front garden.

The uses of rooms next to the pavement also have an impact. For example bedrooms and bathrooms require greater privacy than a lounge or kitchen, and so should not be positioned at the pavement edge of the building.

Paraphernalia such as meter boxes, gases pipes, satellite dishes etc. can have an adverse effect on both the individual property and the street scene as a whole. Paraphernalia should not proliferate the front elevation and should be well considered at an early stage in the design and conversion process.

Financial and legal issues

Be aware that obtaining the freehold of a retail property can be a lengthy and complicated legal process. Your solicitor will want to check for any hidden legal liabilities or any restrictive covenants attached to the premises. You could also be liable for the business rates until you have received planning permission.

Mortgage lenders can be unwilling to lend if you are looking to convert flats above excessively noisy or smelly business premises such as pubs, night clubs, dry cleaners, fast food takeaways etc.

Converting public houses

Over the last couple of decades, many public houses in the UK have struggled to remain viable as businesses. More than a quarter of public houses have closed since 2000, forcing many pub companies to sell off their building stock, often below market value, to reduce debt.

Disused or closed pubs can often occupy prime locations with good transport links, extra outbuildings and spacious gardens and parking areas, making them ideal for a range of conversions, from flats to HMOs, and, in some cases, reverting back to their original use as houses.

However, some public house locations are less than ideal for conversion to residential use, for example those facing very busy roads or inner urban areas where the surrounding uses are predominantly offices/industrial premises, which are more likely to be more suited for conversion to local convenience stores or coffee shops.

Many of these units are sold freehold with vacant possession while others may have a very short lease where the freehold can

be eventually purchased. These are typical known as 'cold investments' where there is a potential for redevelopment at a later date.

Financial and legal

Any would-be pub converters need to be aware that business rates may still apply before planning permission is granted. You will probably need to appoint a legal representative who will negotiate with the pub companies or breweries and you will also need to check if there are any restrictive covenants attached to the property. Some pub companies include 'overage' or 'uplift' clauses which mean if you put in an application for change of use, you could be liable to give the seller a percentage of the increase in value of the property.

In addressing the conversion of a pub to residential use, consideration needs to be given to the use of the pub over the last 10 years, and the nature and type of conversion. There are some financial incentives and tax breaks available when converting commercial into residential. Conversion and refurbishment costs can attract 5 per cent VAT instead of the usual 20%. Spending time considering the VAT implications could make a significant difference to the overall project costs.

For a complete change of use, raising a conventional mortgage might not be possible. You may have to look at development finance, bridging or other forms of private finance.

Planning

Because in recent years so many pubs have closed, there's more chance of the remaining ones being regarded as 'community assets', making it more difficult for them to be de-licensed. If the owners of a pub put it up for sale, there is a legal right for local people to apply for it to be registered as 'an asset of community value'. This has the effect of 'stopping the clock' for five years whilst other avenues are explored (such as community ownership).

You will need to check that there is no local pub protection policy, if the area is run down planners may want to keep the commercial element to boost local employment. It is advisable to get a planning consultant to complete a planning pre application to check the councils view on this.

Pubs that are listed or located in conservation areas are far more likely to meet local resistance. For permission to be granted, evidence will need to be submitted showing that that every effort has been made to keep it open.

Some pubs will have a statutory listing, often Grade II, and while this shouldn't necessarily deter you from purchasing this type of building, it will require planning as well as listed building consent. You can still achieve an interesting internal refurbishment by working closely with the local conservation officer.

Before buying the property get advice from local planners on the likelihood of obtaining permission for residential development. Don't buy on the assumption that 'change of use' will be given unless serious research has gone into your due diligence. If there is much competition you can secure the unit subject to planning permission thereby negating and reducing your risk. ■

Mills and industrial building conversions

Many former mills and redundant industrial buildings have been successfully remodelled to create apartments or flats. However, there are lots of industrial buildings which are simply not suitable for conversion because of their size and shape. Modern shed-type buildings, large warehouses for example, are generally unacceptable.

Older textile mills, on the other hand, can be relatively simple to convert. Some will benefit from strong cast iron frameworks and enjoy lots of natural light from windows regularly spaced across relatively narrow floorplates, making subdivision into flats a viable solution.

However, construction methods changed over time to accommodate increasingly large machinery and equipment. Some later Victorian mills, for example, tend to have much wider floorplates. These types of property can be difficult to convert into smaller units because of the lack of natural light towards the centre of the building. Another common challenge to overcome when converting these types of buildings are the low ceilings which can make conversion into flats or apartments very difficult.

On the plus side, older industrial buildings will often have adjoining buildings, previously used for storage or as workshops, which could be suitable for conversion.

A building's location will be critical to a successful conversion. Disused factories on an industrial estate for example, are not going to make attractive places to live. On the other hand, old mills which enjoy picturesque locations are more likely to be conservation areas or lie on designated greenbelt land, where it will be more difficult to obtain planning permission. Another factor to consider with old mills is they are often located next to watercourses which often bring additional flood risk implications.

Converting old mills or warehouses are usually large-scale projects which tend to require large amounts of finance to undertake, presenting equally large risks and rewards. Works involved with these types of conversion can be complex, and could involve the inclusion of lifts, new roofs as well extensive IT infrastructure and cabling.

Older industrial buildings and the surrounding land may also present contamination risks. Establishing who is legally liable for any remediation works before purchasing sites of this nature is critical as decontamination works can be extremely costly.

When it comes to planning requirements, the local authority may be obliged to first consider non-residential uses for building of this type, such as start-up space for young businesses, in a bid to create new jobs.

If a conversion to residential is a viable option, one of the key design elements required will be the preservation of the building's character. This will involve retaining and protecting the existing structure, limiting the amount of new windows for example, which may subsequently restrict the number of units permitted. Some large-scale conversions may need to include a component of social housing. Conversely, this requirement could offer the potential to increase the number of units elsewhere on the site.

Some councils in former mill towns may have further planning requirements for conversions of this nature. The first port of call should be the relevant contact at the council's planning department who can offer pre-application advice about what is required from a planning perspective.

Conservation

Historic buildings play a central role in many towns and cities. They lend character to an area and can have deep-seated associations for local residents and communities. They can also offer a foundation for regeneration initiatives, helping to boost the local economy and create jobs.

Sensitive restoration and reuse of old buildings therefore can help achieve this. Most old mills will be designated as listed, which will require listed building consent, or situated in conservation areas where the priority will be protecting the external elements of the structure. Any potential impact on local archaeology may also need to be assessed.

Greenbelt

The Council's Development Plan will normally include the criteria for change of use or conversion of property on greenbelt land. Uses that create jobs or boost tourism may be deemed more appropriate.

Waterside regeneration and flood risk

Mills are normally located near to water courses and a key element of the design will be proposals to mitigate the risk of flooding to the development itself as well as negating any flood risk the new development may bring. As mills were built to utilise water (or wind) there may be opportunities to develop renewable energy systems that can make use of these natural resources.

Contamination

Some former industrial buildings will have significant contamination issues. No development will be allowed to go ahead unless the risk from contamination has been removed or measures introduced to make the site suitable for the intended end use. Where contamination is an issue, a desk top study and a site investigation report will need to form part of the planning application. ■

Developing historic buildings - what you need to know

Historic England offers some practical guidance for developers venturing into developing historic buildings. Many of these issues will apply to the development of new buildings in addition to historic buildings, but can be more complicated with heritage assets because of the following:

- The need to understand the significance of the heritage
- There may be a lot of interest from members of the local community about what is done to heritage assets and the need, therefore, to engage with them.
- The need to balance maintaining the integrity of the heritage asset against making interventions that are needed to make the development financially viable.
- The many possible complications that might arise in dealing with an historic structure and how to prepare for them.
- The need to apply for listed building consent in addition to planning permission for change of use
- The possibilities of arguing for Enabling Development and the implications of doing so
- The need, often, to work with specialists in dealing with heritage assets
- Complicated treatment of VAT.
- The need, often, to raise a cocktail of funds, sometimes including grants

Office conversions

Converting run-down or redundant offices to residential use can sometimes provide a viable alternative to commercial use. Offices built on the fringes of towns and cities in the 60s and 70s for example, are particularly suited to conversion.

However, those built from the 80s onwards tend to have deeper floorplates with sealed windows and were designed to be air conditioned and artificially lit. These buildings are often unsuitable for conversion because of the lack of natural light towards the centre of the building. The insertion of lightwells could help rectify this, but this can be an expensive undertaking.

Expendable high-rise office blocks in central districts can be very costly to demolish so converting to residential may provide a more viable option than demolishing and rebuilding from scratch. However, those built in the 60s and 70s were constructed with thin curtain walling which can be difficult (and costly) to upgrade to today's higher energy efficiency and fire safety standards.

Converting redundant offices in industrial areas or on business parks may not make attractive places to live but good transport

links could benefit any proposed scheme in these types of areas.

Specialist legal advice will be needed to acquire the freehold on commercial buildings. Developers may need to buy out long leases which can be difficult to resolve from a legal perspective. The cost will be depend on its location, state of repair as well as its potential for conversion – including whether it already has the relevant planning permissions.

Planning

The Government is keen to promote the conversion of redundant offices buildings to residential use. Developers have benefitted from a relaxation in planning rules in recent times which has allowed office to residential conversions to increase significantly under permitted development rights (PDRs). They derive from a general permission granted by parliament, rather than a specific one from the local authority – and as such allow developers to bypass the local planning process.

Whether you can use PDRs to avoid full planning permission will first hinge on which 'use of class' the commercial property falls in to. However, not all local authorities have relaxed the rules and even if planning permission is not required, developers still need to seek 'prior approval' from the local authority. Here developers will need to demonstrate they have considered the flood risk and the impact of the development on local transport and highways.

Developers should also be aware it's only the change of use that's permitted, not the conversion itself. In other words, if you need to knock down walls or wish to add extra windows for example, you could still require full planning permission. It is advisable to engage with your local planning authority early on in the process as each authority operates differently.

Residential flat conversions

The sub-division or conversion of houses and other properties can be an effective way of increasing housing supply to cater for the trend towards reduced household sizes. Such accommodation widens choice in the housing market for smaller households. It is often a more affordable alternative to purpose-built flats, especially for first-time buyers.

Some larger houses are too big for single occupation and a conversion can extend their life by encouraging improvement and repair. This is also a more sustainable approach to providing smaller households – reusing an existing property to provide more dwelling units, and a more efficient occupation of the building. There is also the added benefit of retaining the established residential character and pattern of development of an area which can be harmed by demolition and redevelopment.

However, not all houses will be suitable for conversion to flats. It is important for future occupiers of flat conversions that the size of the property and its physical characteristics, including layout and size of rooms, are of a suitable standard. Most councils will stipulate minimum sizes for living areas in converted flats and these guidelines will often refer to the Nationally Described Space Standards.

A mix of different sized units will normally be required, and large conversions

exclusively to bedsits or all one bedroom flats will rarely be acceptable.

Properties need to be large enough to accommodate a reasonably spacious ground floor entrance lobby with independent stair access provided to the upper floor flats. House conversions which alter the internal and external fabric of the building the least tend to be the most suitable, as these tend to use existing windows, doors and rooms.

Including a loft or basement conversion can sometimes provide further accommodation but this is not always straightforward and can be problematic. For more information about loft or basement conversions, please refer to our sister guide www.extendingyourhome.com/bury

Planning

Planning permission normally runs with the use of the land and how the proposed development will affect issues such as highway safety, the character and appearance of an area, and the living conditions of the proposed occupiers and those in adjacent properties.

For example, a flat conversion may result in an increased demand for on-street parking, and an increase in traffic flows; the garden areas may be used entirely for parking and refuse storage and not for garden purposes, or the living accommodation may be inadequate in terms of proximity to sources of noise.

Guidelines for the provision of suitable standards of accommodation should take into account the following design elements:

- Compliance with fire regulations is one of the most important design factors to consider when converting a building, and particularly, when subdividing a property into separate flats. There are two aspects to be considered regarding fire safety: fire separation of the units and the provision of a safe means of escape (see box out opposite/page XX (61))
- All dwellings should be self-contained with their own entrance. These should be laid out to afford economical use of space, adequate privacy and minimum disturbance to neighbours from noise. Flats will normally be required to have their own lobby area and front door (i.e. no habitable rooms accessed directly from the main stairwell unless there is a lobby separating the entrance doors from the staircase).
- The larger or largest unit should be located on the ground floor, as these often have access to a garden area and could be attractive to families.
- The layout design should minimise noise disturbance with similar rooms in flats above and below 'stacked', i.e. kitchens above kitchens, bedrooms above bedrooms.
- If new pipework cannot be accommodated internally, to avoid new waste pipes running down front elevations, bathrooms may need to be located to the rear of the property.
- Storage facilities for household waste should always be incorporated into a proposal for a flat conversion
- Landscaping and boundary treatment is an important part of the setting of a building and the uses of and around it. An over intensive use of a property can often be detected by the appearance and use of its external areas.
- There may also be a range of other issues related to the specific location of the site that would affect the consideration of a planning application for a proposed conversion to flats, i.e. flooding, or protected species such as bats.

A well-thought out proposal should clearly show how the physical characteristics of a property, its design, layout and room size can make a positive contribution to an area as well as provide suitable living accommodation for the future occupiers.

Fire safety design for flat conversions

There are a number of key design requirements for flat conversions. Developers should note that buildings of more than four storeys will need to meet more demanding criteria.

- A safe means of escape must be provided for all occupants. A 'protected stairwell' escape route typically comprises a stairway, landing and corridor or internal entrance hall enclosed with fire resistant doors, walls and floors to protect it from smoke and fire.
- All structural elements (including walls, floor and stairways) should achieve 60 minutes fire resistance.
- All flats will normally be required to have their own front door and private entrance lobby or hallway, rather than habitable rooms accessed directly from the main stairwell.
- Entrance doors to flats must be of a 30-minute fire resisting type fitted with 'intumescent' heat/smoke seals and a self-closer. Doors should be hung with three sets of steel hinges.
- To prevent the danger of someone being trapped in a fire without a key, front doors to flats must be fitted with a lock that can be opened without a key from inside; but to lock it from outside must only be possible with a key.
- Inner rooms in flats (i.e. ones that can only be accessed through another room) will not be acceptable unless the inner room has its own fire escape (escape windows are acceptable below 4.5m above ground level).
- A mains-linked smoke alarm system is required within each flat and additional smoke/heat alarms may be required dependent upon the flat layout. Emergency lighting to common parts escape routes will be required except in low rise development. Fire detection is only required within the flat and not communal areas although extra smoke detection may be required in communal areas for automatic-opening vents at the head of the communal staircase.
- The common parts and the flats should be totally enclosed by fire resisting construction.
- Gas meters should be installed away from fire risk areas, ideally outside the building.
- All new dwellings in Wales (including those formed by change of use) will require a domestic fire suppression system such as sprinklers.

Listed buildings

If a property is listed then special care will be needed to ensure that the proposal does not detract from the character of the building. This includes internal as well as external alterations. For example, the original staircase should be retained and kept open, original doors should be retained and upgraded to meet fire regulations where required, and rooms should not be subdivided, except when this will not detract from the proportions of a room. Original features such as fireplaces, cornices and skirting boards should all be retained. Finally, listed building consent (as well as planning permission) will be required for the works. Further information on making a listed building application is on page 11.

Conservation areas

Any development proposals must 'preserve or enhance' the special character or appearance of designated conservation areas. Consequently, even greater care will be required over any external alterations to properties in order to ensure that they do not detract from the character or appearance of the area.

Where applications are being made for flat conversions to a listed building or in a conservation area, more detailed drawings of the proposal are most likely to be required.

Applicants should also discuss their proposals for flat conversions with relevant contact at the local authority who can advise further.

Financial and legal

Developers need to be aware that some older properties may have restrictive covenants in the deeds that prohibit a change of use. Obtaining the freehold of the property is preferred to a long lease as the owner of the freehold may prohibit conversion works. Specialist legal advice should be sought at an early stage before buying a property.

Student accommodation and hostel conversions

Student housing remains a growth market in many areas of the country, as universities look to improve and expand upon their student offering.

And as industrial buildings are abandoned or are sold off to developers, it has become increasingly common to see commercial properties such as offices, shops and even factories being converted into student accommodation.

Converting commercial properties to student accommodation can make effective use of a defunct site or an underused house.

However, these sorts of developments will require varying planning permissions depending on the changes taking place and the level of independent accommodation being created.

In order to comply with legislation for these properties, known as Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO), the law requires that you provide facilities for students and ensure

that the building conforms to all safety legislation. The accommodation will need to comply with more stringent requirements for the fire escapes, fire alarms and smoke alarms etc. Developers should consult the local authority building control team at an early stage to ascertain what extra precautions will be required.

One of the most popular conversions is to turn a traditional three- or four-bedroom house into student accommodation for six or more students. If the basic structure of the house is already there to allow conversion, more shower rooms and bathrooms can be added by extending the plumbing which already exists.

Taking advice from architects at an early stage can help you work out the cost of such a conversion, and also ensure that you comply with the current legislation.

Whilst students bring a host of positive benefits and can help to conserve the vitality of an area, it is essential to maintain and secure positive links with local residents during every stage of the planning application process and beyond.

A number of special requirements will apply:

- There must be a demonstrable need for additional student accommodation in the area.
- Developers may need to enter into a legal agreement that stipulates including that occupation is restricted only to genuine students in full-time education at a local University or College. Provision for how the accommodation is utilised outside term time may need to be included.
- There must be clear arrangements for car parking and the provision of amenity space must be accounted for.
- Accommodation for on-site warden may be required for larger projects

Hostels

The conversion of large houses and the change of use into flats or bedsits can often make an important contribution to the local housing stock, providing small dwellings often for rent and without the requirement for additional land up-take. Such conversions are also often the best way to utilise vacant or underused space, including space above shops.

However, it is recognised that the conversion of buildings to HMO can raise privacy issues, parking problems, put demand on services and can have an adverse effect on residential amenity. Some conversions also seek to change the external appearance of buildings which can sometimes harm the fabric of a particular building or even the whole character of an area.

Due to these concerns it is important that any conversions to HMO that do take place provide satisfactory standards of accommodation for future and existing residents and that any harmful impact on their amenity is minimised.

It is also important to safeguard the character of areas and to preserve important

architectural and historical aspects of the building to be converted.

HMOs and hostels include living accommodation where facilities such as kitchen, bathroom and WC are shared by a number of occupants who otherwise live separately.

Although HMOs can sometimes provide useful accommodation for people who do not wish to or cannot afford to buy property, it is desirable, wherever possible, to upgrade the standard of accommodation to that of self-contained flats in the interests of health, safety and amenity for the occupants.

What is a HMO?

In strict planning terms, a HMO is defined as a property where two or more residents occupy a unit of accommodation and do not operate as a family unit.

The Housing Act 2004 gives a much more detailed classification of HMO accommodation, including:

- One or more units of living accommodation not comprising self contained flats;
- Occupied by persons who do not form a single household;
- It is their only or main residence;
- Rents are paid by at least one of the persons; and
- Two or more of the households share one or more basic amenity (e.g. bathroom or kitchen).

However, like planning, part of the standard test for a unit of accommodation being classified as a HMO refers to whether a building is being occupied by persons who do not form a single household.

In the first instance, the planning authority will seek to ensure that the premises the subject of a planning application are actually suitable for conversion to a HMO. Properties should be of sufficient size to accommodate the proposals and large enough to offer satisfactory levels of accommodation for future residents.

Normally, HMOs will be restricted to either detached or large semi-detached properties (with detached being the preference), as these tend to have larger internal and external floor areas. Large terraced houses may also be considered but this will depend on their size and on the traffic and noise impact of the development.

While different rules may apply in different areas of the country, planners will not normally accept proposals on properties with an original floor area of less than 115 sq metres, as this is considered to be the minimum size at which a property can be converted into a HMO and provide satisfactory accommodation for future residents.

However, just because a property achieves the minimum required floor area does not in itself mean that it is suitable for a conversion to a HMO.

HMO licencing

The aim of HMO licensing is to ensure that the highest risk properties in the private rented sector are identified, meet legal standards and are properly managed, for the benefit of both the landlord and tenants.

A landlord must have a licence for a HMO if the property:

- Is three or more storeys high
- Has five or more people in more than one household and share amenities such as bathrooms, toilets and cooking facilities

From the October 2018 the definition of a licensable HMO was extended to include:

- All HMO's with five or more tenants, forming two or more households, which share some facilities regardless of the number of storeys
- Purpose-built flats with up to two flats in the block and where one or both of the flats are occupied by five or more people forming two or more households. This will apply regardless of whether the flat is above commercial premises or within a residential block

All landlords and agents with properties meeting these criteria will require a licence to continue operating lawfully. Licences are issued by the local authority.

Fire safety in HMOs

HMOs must be fitted with fire warning systems such as fire alarms and heat or smoke detectors. These should be placed throughout the building including escape routes. There should be smoke detectors in every bedroom and in communal areas, and the kitchen must have a heat detector. The fire warning system should be serviced and checked regularly.

In addition, there should be at least one fire extinguisher (of the correct type) provided on each floor and a fire blanket in every shared kitchen (sufficient for the number of residents and the size of property). These must also be checked periodically. Any upholstered furnishings provided by landlords must be fire retarding.

HMOs must have an escape route that can resist fire, smoke and fumes long enough for all occupants to get out of the building (usually at least 30 minutes). This could be an external fire escape, or internal stairs, corridors or walkways. All the walls, partitions, ceilings and floors along the escape route must be fire resistant. All the doors leading to the escape route must also be fire resistant.

The common areas of HMO's must have a fire risk assessment carried out to meet the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. For more details, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-sleeping-accommodation

HMOs and electrical safety

Landlords of HMOs must have the electrical installations checked every five years.

Landlords are required by law to ensure that:

- Electrical systems are safe at the start of a tenancy
- Electrical systems and appliances are maintained in a safe condition and appliances have the CE safety marking.
- Regular safety checks are carried out to ensure the electrical system and appliances remain in good working order.

Before each new tenant moves in, an electrical safety inspection should be carried out by a qualified electrician. Known as a periodic inspection report this should:

- Reveal if any electrical circuits or equipment are overloaded.
- Find any potential electric shock risks and fire hazards.
- Identify any defective electrical work.
- Highlight any lack of earthing.

Converting barns and farm buildings

As the rural economy has changed over time, many agricultural buildings have now become obsolete, offering potential for redevelopment to residential use. Barn conversions, for example, have become very popular. However, due to the strict planning rules governing new dwellings in the countryside, obtaining planning permission can be difficult.

While certain types of barn and farm building conversions can be developed under permitted development rights, in the case of residential conversion schemes permitted development rights will normally be withdrawn as a condition of the planning permission in order that all future alterations may be controlled.

Securing planning permission may not always be possible, particularly if buildings are listed. Even if planning permission for residential use is granted, there can be a multitude of design challenges to overcome and this may include strict constraints on how much you can alter the interior and exterior of a building.

The suitability of a barn conversion to residential will vary across the country. This can depend on the methods and materials used in its construction. Developing modern farm buildings, those normally clad in corrugated sheeting for example, will

be less contentious from a planning perspective, but most of the time these buildings will provide only a basic shell.

Heritage

Older, more traditional agricultural buildings are a significant part of our national heritage. One of the objectives for allowing conversions is to enable these buildings to be retained for future generations. It is therefore essential that the characteristics of the buildings survive to be identifiable in the future.

Reuse of a building contributes toward a more sustainable form of development in that it seeks to reuse a building, and therefore reinvests the energy in the building. In energy terms, it is better to reuse a building, than demolish it and rebuild it.

Financial and legal

Many redundant farm buildings are dilapidated, requiring extensive remedial work. Furthermore, the cost of complying with demanding planning conditions, eg. where the use of traditional materials is stipulated, can be substantial, particularly with listed buildings. Another consideration is the presence of asbestos-based materials which are common in farm buildings and can be very expensive to have removed.

From a legal perspective, it's essential that solicitors check that all relevant access rights are in place. Or where someone else owns the track leading to the property there is the potential risk of being held to ransom for the subsequent granting of such rights. And roads that are unadopted and unmade may have significant upkeep liabilities.

Planning

Full planning permission is needed for a change of use (not just outline consent). Listed building consent may also be required in some cases.

Conversion to residential use is widely regarded as potentially the most damaging in terms of the impact on an old building's historic character, features and setting. It

Design guidance for converting farm buildings

The design of a conversion should commence with the existing buildings and not with a preconceived notion regarding the size or type of accommodation required, or the most profitable scheme. In short, the finished building and its surroundings should complement its original use.

It is important to ensure that the design proposed for planning permission and listed building consent also conforms to the building regulations and can be built as submitted. Some building regulations requirements for upgrading historic buildings can be relatively flexible, such as the extent of insulation, but some requirements are more onerous, notably those concerned with escape in the event of fire.

Ensuring compliance with the building regulations at the outset will save time later. Failure to do so may result in you having to reapply for planning permission and/or listed building consent. In the worst case, you may not be able to carry out the development at all.

One of the first issues to consider is whether the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without demolition or substantial rebuilding. A structural survey is required to support this and the submission must show and specify any works proposed.

Existing roof form, door and window openings, and the doors and windows are important to the character of the building and existing internal spaces and finishes should be respected.

Avoid trying to fit a modern house into the open volume of a building. It should be clear from the inside that it is a conversion.

Services for the building also need to be considered. All plumbing should remain internal, and the boiler flue carefully sited. Consider how the building will be heated and/or where the oil or gas tank will be sited. The reducing number of traditional buildings is thought to have an adverse effect on the bird and bat population. Make sure you have nesting/roosting opportunities for bats and owls in your design.

therefore tends to be considered as a last resort with alternative potential uses given priority, such as the re-use of buildings for farm-related business (eg conversion to farm offices, shops or workshops). Uses such as leisure/tourism, restaurants and recreation are generally less demanding of the building and its setting and can also contribute to the rural economy. So a marketing exercise may first need to be carried out to identify whether there is demand for a less damaging non-residential use.

Where no other viable use can be identified, designs for conversion to residential should be 'true to the building' by seeking to retain its form and character rather than merely transform it into a new house (see box out opposite).

Other planning policies that may apply include:

- Highways: Transport issues can be a major factor when determining suitable re-use of buildings, particularly in remote areas.
- Green belt: The criteria for change of use or conversion of buildings in the Green Belt are normally set out in the Council's Development Plan

A preliminary discussion with the planning department is always advisable.

Churches and chapel conversions

During the 19th century many new churches were built to accommodate rises in population, particularly in industrial, urban areas. Since the Second World War however, this earlier trend of chapel building has been completely reversed. Declining congregations, lack of funding and high maintenance costs have forced many chapels to close.

A large number of these have been offered for sale or left to deteriorate until they eventually become dangerous structures and are demolished. It is largely these urban 19th century churches that become redundant and are made available for purchase, with the occasional rural equivalent. Finding viable alternative uses for these buildings is important to help avoid demolition and preserve the national heritage.

Redundant or dilapidated churches can make interesting conversions, but are not suited to everyone, particularly those with graveyards attached as the stigma of the necropolis may limit the appeal of such properties to some prospective buyers. One unique concern that needs to be clarified when contemplating conversion of church buildings with graveyards is the matter of access rights for relatives to visit graves. And where the

Guiding principles on church conversions

The key guiding principle on any chapel or church conversion will be retaining the character and appearance of the building. The design should take into account the following elements:

- Do not create additional openings unless absolutely necessary
- Always make use of existing doors and windows
- The existing rooflines should be respected; for example, chimney stacks of brick or stone should not be added to the building
- The use of dormer windows of any kind should be avoided and even conservation rooflights must be positioned to be the least visually intrusive
- All external walls should be retained with the original finish or replaced on a 'like-for-like' basis
- New doors and fenestration should be sympathetic in design to the existing and be correctly proportioned to the scale of the building
- Other external features, such as gates and railings within the curtilage of the building must be retained.

Internally, the following should be considered:

- Try to retain as many of the room spaces as possible without destroying their original form
- Every effort must be made to retain original staircases in their positions. The same applies to galleries
- Original fittings such as pews and seating, lighting etc. should be retained where possible
- The insertion of a first floor can be technically challenging. If a gallery is present this will make it easier to locate and the gallery supports may be utilised to hold up the new floor
- Damage to the external walls must be kept to a minimum. It is often preferable not to support intermediate floors off the external walls but to use a freestanding arrangement using independent columns
- The most important internal feature in most chapels is the ornate ceiling, this must be retained, whether kept visible as a feature or hidden under a suspended ceiling
- It is always preferable to keep the ceiling visible. A suspended ceiling will involve fixings being attached to the original ceiling and damaging it
- Other internal features, such as ornate plaster covings, friezes, niches, screens should be preserved and protected. Partitions etc. should be constructed in such a way as to avoid damage to these features
- Finishes and fittings should be appropriate and in harmony with the surroundings.

building works are likely to impact upon any human remains, the law requires them to be removed and interred somewhere else. However, if your proposals would not involve any disturbance of the burials, an exemption from removal and re-interment can be granted by the Home Office.

Normal planning, listed building and conservation area controls normally apply to church buildings. Planning permission will usually be needed for a change of use and listed building consent for any significant alterations to a listed building. You should contact the local planning officer to discuss your proposals in the first instance as the planning authority might already have agreed a development brief on likely permitted uses.

Depending on the denomination of the church, the relevant Church authorities will need to make the final decision about selling the property. They also carry out de-consecration of redundant church buildings and will want to approve plans for architectural or structural changes.

Closed or disused churches may have been unattended for a large amount of time before final decommissioning and may have suffered years of neglect, requiring extensive remedial work. Older churches may be listed and can be enormously expensive to repair. The cost of complying with planning conditions, such as where the use traditional materials is stipulated can be substantial.

Any residual legal rights for public access, rights of way etc. must be checked by solicitors. They must also study the church title deeds for restrictive covenants which can restrict certain types of use and alterations (regardless of planning consent) which could seriously hinder a conversion project.

The Church of England publishes a list of its closed churches currently up for sale at https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/parish-reorganisation-and-closed-church-buildings/closed-churches/closed-church-buildings the website also offers further guidance for developers looking to purchase a closed building.

Conversion reversal

Planning guidance should be sought when it comes to reversing conversion work. One of the most common reversals is returning a large house that has been subdivided into separate flats back into a single dwelling.

Where development does not result in a change in the use class of the property, planning permission is not normally required. However, the legal position is not clear and some councils have successfully argued that 'amalgamation' proposals constitute a material change of use for which planning permission is required. Planning decisions therefore, will depend on a proposal's individual planning merit, taking into account any local planning policies which will encompass current housing needs in the area.

Developers may wish to consider applying for a Lawful Development

Certificate (LDC) which would establish whether any proposed amalgamation constitutes a material change of use. In the first instance, you should talk to your local planning officer about the proposal.

Business activity in the home

Planning permission will be needed for a change of use from residential to business use. However, a limited amount of business activity is allowed in the home. This includes:

- Using a room as your personal office
- Using part of your home for bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Providing a childminding service
- Hairdressing, dressmaking or teaching (as long as it's small scale and does not involve a radical change of use).

In some cases, storing goods connected with a business in garden buildings is allowed too. The key determinant from a planning perspective is if the property is mainly used as a home or, is the main use as a business. Tests to ascertain the latter will include:

- Has the business use caused a marked rise in traffic or visitors to the property?
- Does the business involve any activities that are unusual in a residential area?
- Does the business disturb the neighbours at unreasonable hours?
- Does the property emit noise or smells?

The first port of call should be the planning officer to discuss any proposed business activity.

Further information

Below is a list of the types of work covered by competent person schemes in the UK. The respective website links are on pages 78-79.

Installation of cavity wall insulation:

Blue Flame Certification, CERTASS, Certsure, CIGA, NAPIT

Installation of solid wall insulation:

BBA, Blue Flame Certification, CERTASS, Certsure, NAPIT

Installation of gas appliances:

Gas Safe Register

Installation or replacement of hot water and heating systems:

APHC, BESCA, Blue Flame Certification, Certsure, Gas Safe Register, HETAS, NAPIT, OFTEC

Installation or replacement of oil-fired boilers and storage tanks:

APHC, BESCA, Blue Flame Certification, Certsure, NAPIT, OFTEC

Installation or replacement of solid fuel burners:

APHC, BESCA, Certsure, HETAS, NAPIT, OFTEC

Installation of fixed air conditioning or mechanical ventilation systems in dwellings:

BESCA, Blue Flame Certification, Certsure, NAPIT

Any electrical installation work in dwellings:

BESCA, Blue Flame Certification, Certsure, NAPIT, OFTEC

Electrical installation work only in association with other work in dwellings (eg. kitchen installations, boiler installations):

APHC, BESCA, Blue Flame Certification, Certsure, NAPIT

Replacement windows, doors, roof windows, or roof lights in dwellings:

Blue Flame Certification, BM TRADA, CERTASS, Certsure, FENSA, INVEKA, NAPIT

Installation of plumbing and water supply systems and bathrooms and sanitary ware:

APHC, BESCA, Certsure, HETAS, NAPIT

Replacement of roof coverings on pitched and flat roofs (not including solar panels):

NFRC, NAPIT

Installation of microgeneration or renewable technologies:

APHC, BESCA, Certsure, HETAS, NAPIT, OFTEC.

	APHC	www.aphc.co.uk
	BESCA	www.besca.org.uk
	Blue Flame	www.blueflamecertification.com
	BM TRADA	www.bmtrada.com
	British Board of Agrément (BBA)	www.bbacerts.co.uk
	Certsure LLP (trading as NICEIC)	www.niceic.com
	NFRC Competent Person Scheme	www.nfrccps.com
	CERTASS	www.certass.co.uk

	CIGA	www.ciga.co.uk
	FENSA	www.fensa.co.uk
	Gas Safe Register	www.gassaferegister.co.uk
	HETAS	www.hetas.co.uk
	INVEKA	www.networkveka.co.uk
	NAPIT	www.napit.org.uk
	OFTEC	www.oftec.org

Bury Council Building Control
3 Knowsley Place
Duke Street
Bury
BL9 0EJ

Tel: 0161 253 5313
Email: building.control@bury.gov.uk