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Planning Permission and Building Regulation factsheet

The information is only guidance. You should always check with your local planning and building regulation authority before starting any building work.

Installing many energy conservation and renewable energy technologies, such as insulation, solar panels and heat pumps, has now been made a lot simpler thanks to Permitted development rights introduced on 6th April 2008

What is Planning permission?

Planning permission means asking your local planning authority if you can do a certain piece of building work. It will be granted (possibly subject to certain conditions) or refused.

You normally apply for planning permission to your local planning authority.

There are many smaller developments for private houses that don't need planning permission. These are called 'permitted developments'. These developments still have to follow certain building rules. For peace of mind you can apply to your local planning authority, for a document known as a Lawful Development Certificate, confirming that your building work is a permitted development

What is Building Regulations approval?

Most building work has to meet building regulations to make sure it's safe.

Always check with your local authority building control team or a private sector Approved Inspector whether you need building regulations approval.

Permitted development rights

In England, changes to permitted development rights for renewable technologies have lifted the requirements for planning permission for most domestic micro generation technologies.

If you live in a listed building or a conservation area, you should also contact your council to check on local policy.

Insulation

You don't normally need planning permission for installing insulation as long as the outside of your house isn't changed.

Insulation has to follow building regulations whether it's installed during the construction of a house or fitted afterwards.

If you are installing loft insulation as part of a roof renovation project, where more than 25 per cent of the roof is being renewed, then the level of insulation should meet the standards required by building regulations Approved Documents. Care should be taken not to block any ventilation at the edges (eaves).

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The installation of cavity wall insulation is specifically defined as notifiable building work in the Building Regulations. This means that for all buildings which are not exempted from the Regulations it will be necessary to submit a building notice to a building control body stating that cavity wall insulation work will be carried out. Most local authorities do not levy a building control charge in respect of such building notices. If the installer is registered with CIGA, the Cavity Insulation Guarantee Agency, the installer will in most cases submit the building notice. In any case building owners should always check that a building notice will be submitted.

Where 25 per cent or more of an external wall is being renovated building regulations would normally apply, and the thermal insulation of the wall would have to meet the minimum energy efficiency values standards required by Building Regulations Approved Documents. In this context renovation means the provision of a new layer or the replacement of an existing layer, but excludes decorative

Air source heat pumps

The government is currently revising planning permissions for air source heat pumps. After the revision you won't need planning permission for them, if you meet certain conditions. Until then you might need planning permission.

You normally need building regulations approval for installing an air source heat pump. Talk to us for advice before starting work.

Ground source heat pumps:

Permitted

Water source heat pumps:

Permitted

Building regulation apply to ground and water source heat pumps. This includes all electrical and plumbing work. Installation should be carried out by a qualified installer. In addition permission may be required from the Environment Agency if extracting water from a watercourse.

Heating system including Micro combined heat and power/biomass

You don't normally need planning permission for installing a heating system in a house if the work is all internal.

If the installation needs a flue outside, you have to make sure you follow the conditions for permitted development.

You need to comply with building regulations, they also apply to the electrical installation and plumbing work.

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Solar PV and solar thermal (roof mounted):

Permitted unless;

- Panels when installed protrude more than 200mm
- Are above the ridgeline
- They would be placed on the principal elevation facing onto or visible from the highway in buildings in Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites

Solar PV and solar thermal (stand alone):

Permitted unless;

- More than 4 metres in height
- Installed less than 5 metres away from any boundary
- Above a maximum area of array of 9m²
- Situated within any part of the boundary of the dwelling house or would be visible from the highway in Conservations Areas and World Heritage Sites

Wind Turbines

The planning regime for installing wind turbines is complex and evolving.

At present in most cases you will need to apply for planning permission from your local authority to add a domestic wind turbine to your house, or grounds surrounding your home.

It is up to each local authority to decide what information you may need to provide with your application. It may be helpful to contact your authority before applying to discuss the following planning issues:

- Visual impact
- Noise
- Vibration
- Electrical interference (with TV aerials)
- Safety

If you wish to install a wind turbine which will be attached to your house building regulations will normally apply.

Size, weight and force exerted on fixed points would be considerable.

Building regulations also apply to other aspects of the work such as electrical installation.

If the wind turbine is not attached to your house, then only the electrical installation and connection will be captured by the requirements of the building regulations



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Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Permitted Development and planning policy in general is a devolved responsibility. The Welsh Assembly Government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Government are currently all considering changes to their legislation on permitted developments, to facilitate installations of micro generation technologies. Legislation is expected in all three countries later this year.

Until then, householders in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland must consult with their local authority regarding planning permission.

Further information

The UK's Planning Portal's interactive house provides an overview of planning permission and building regulations for householders. You can access the Planning Portal at www.planningportal.gov.uk. The interactive house can be accessed by clicking through General Public then Planning

Always check with your local authority to find out if you require planning permission or not, this information is for guidance only. For specific questions regarding planning in your local area you must ask your local Planning Authority.

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