

Roofspace or attic conversions require a Building Regulation application where the intention is to provide:-

- An extra bedroom (possibly a bathroom)
- A playroom
- A study/office

Where the intended use is to store lightweight items such as suitcases, general household items etc, the provision of loose boarding is generally satisfactory. An application would not be required in such circumstances provided the access to the area is by ladder and not by a new staircase. For the purposes of the regulations a staircase is a flight or flights (other than a ladder) and landings that make it possible to pass on foot to another level or levels.

Please note that ceiling joists are generally not intended to act as a floor and thus are not designed to support heavy loads. Therefore it is important to inform your Building Control Service and make an appropriate Building Regulations application, where the proposed use is for anything other than light storage.

WHY INFORM THE BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE?

The Building Control Department administers and enforces the Northern Ireland Building Regulations, on behalf of the Council, to ensure that buildings are constructed and altered to acceptable standards. Where such works have been carried out without their knowledge and approval it is possible that future property sales could be jeopardised when solicitors acting on the purchaser's behalf carry out conveyancing procedures.

Roofspace conversions are generally considered to be a simple procedure, however, this is not always the case. They should be designed and constructed by competent persons fully aware of the health and safety aspects affecting building occupiers. The following points must be considered and catered for in roofspace conversions:

1. The walls and roof of the roofspace conversion are required not only to keep out the rain and effects of damp, but to also restrict the passage of heat from the living environment to the outside. Consideration of insulation to these walls and roof helps to reduce heat loss and as a consequence will reduce your heating bills.
2. Floors, certain walls and doors are required structurally to resist the effects of a fire for a specified period of time (usually 30 minutes) in a

typical domestic situation. Such provisions amongst others are essential to ensure that you, your family and building occupants, can escape safely in the event of a fire or other emergency.

3. The provision of an automatic smoke or heat detection system is essential to give early warning of fire.
4. The provision of escape windows is an important aspect of life safety in roofspace conversions.
5. The structural adequacy of the 'new floor' has to be designed and checked to ensure it can safely support the new loads placed upon it, without suffering collapse or excessive deflection.
6. Ventilation is essential to most room areas to prevent unhealthy living conditions.
7. Condensation if not properly catered for – especially in areas where it cannot be seen – can cause problems. Particular roofspace layouts and roof construction types require careful consideration with regard to ventilation and vapour barrier provisions.
8. The new floor and room layout requires that you and your family have a safe and easy exit in the event of a fire. Careful consideration of this item is of critical importance.

