

Making a full plans application for planned work to a non-domestic property

Revised July 2018

Building Regulations - Guidance note

5

For further information on building control and the types of applications, please see Guidance Note 1 - Building Control and the Building Regulations and Guidance Note 2 - Types of application you can make under the Building Regulations.

Applying to building control for works to non-domestic properties

The following guide is for property owners, developers, architects or designers who are making an application to us for building regulations approval for building work to non-domestic properties, such as shops and offices. This work may include, for example:

- putting up a new building (such as a new shopping centre);
- extending an existing building (for example building an extension to an office block);
- carrying out structural changes to an existing building (for example removing a load-bearing wall);
- installing services and fittings (such as a heating system, fire-detection system or fire-alarm system or new sanitary provision); or
- changing the use of a building (for example converting a house into a shop).

Pre-submission consultation

For larger, more complex schemes, we offer a free consultation service before you apply for approval. This process gives you an idea of whether your initial designs are being prepared in line with the building regulations. If you want to use this service, contact us on 028 9027 0650 and we will provide you with further advice and the relevant form.

If necessary, we can arrange a meeting with other public agencies, such as the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service to get their opinion of the design at this stage.

Applying for approval

For planned work to a non-domestic property, you must make a full plans application. You will need to provide us with existing plans, proposed plans and specifications. You will normally need to employ an architect or building surveyor to provide the drawings and specification required. You can make the application yourself, or your agent (for example your architect) can do this for you. We will need full name and contact details for both you and your agent. If your application includes your agent's details, we will communicate with them about your application.

For us to accept a full plans application we need:

- A filled-in application form signed by either you or your agent.
- Two copies of the appropriate drawings and specifications for the work. We need four copies of drawings that show you are meeting Part E (Fire Safety) of the regulations as we may have us to consult with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.
- The correct fee.

If any of these items are missing when we receive your application, we will contact you and explain what is still needed. We will give you a period of time to provide this. If we have not received it after this time, we will send your application back to you as invalid.

Fees

For a full plans application there are normally two separate fees. The first fee is called a plan fee and is payable with the application. The second fee is called an inspection fee. For a full plans application, which attracts an inspection fee, we will send you an invoice for the inspection fee once you start the work and after we make our first visit.



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For work to non-domestic properties, fees are based on an estimated cost of works and you will need to give us a written estimate. If the cost of the work is over £10,000, we will also need a full broken down estimate. We have a separate Building Regulations Fee Sheet with a table showing how to work out the fees. A fee calculator is also available at www.buildingcontrol-ni.com/fees. Alternatively, you can phone us on 028 9027 0650 and we will calculate the fee for you.

Assessing your full plans application

We will assess your plans and specification for compliance with the building regulations. We aim to deal with applications for non-domestic properties within our target response time of 35 days. In certain circumstances (for example for applications involving complicated projects) and if you agree, we may extend the target response time.

After assessing your application, we will either approve it or reject it.

Rejections

Often we cannot approve an application first time and will reject it. This can be for a number of reasons, for example because there are no structural calculations or because the design does not cover fire-safety issues correctly.

If we reject your application, we will send you, or your agent, a notice of rejection. This notice will list our reasons for rejecting your application, and will give you details of the appeals procedure. Before we can approve your application, you will need to send us new drawings with the outstanding issues corrected, or provide any additional information required. Our target response time for re-assessing the new drawings is 14 days.

Notice of approval

When we approve your application, we will send you, or your agent, approval documents including a notice of approval and a copy of your drawings stamped 'approved'. We advise you to keep these, as you may need them if you want to sell your property in the future.

How long do you have to start the work?

You have 3 years from the date we receive your application to start the work. If the work is not started within three years, your application will become 'of no effect' and we will send you a notice of no effect. This means that you will not be able to use these plans if you want to carry out this work. Instead, you will need to submit a new application and fee.

The work on site

As soon as you make your application, and pay the correct fee, you can start the work on site. You do not have to wait for us to approve your plans before you start work. However, if you wait for your approval you may prevent having to make costly amendments on site.

It is very important that you, or your builder, tell us when the work is at certain stages so that we can inspect it. You may be committing an offence under the building regulations if you don't do this.

The stages of work you must tell us about are (as appropriate):

- When you start work.
- When you dig the foundations.
- When you pour the foundation concrete.
- When you fit a damp-proof course.
- When you lay and compress the site hardcore (for example, with a roller).
- When you lay the concrete subfloor.
- When you lay the drainage system (both before, and after backfilling).
- Before covering any sound insulation measures.
- Before covering any above ground structural elements.
- When the work is finished.

Other inspections may also be needed. If this is the case, our building control surveyor who is inspecting the works will let you know what these are.

We may ask you to have tests carried out on drains and private sewers to make sure that there are no contraventions of the building regulations. We may

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also take samples of the materials being used in the works to make sure they meet requirements.

Completion of the work

You must notify us at least 5 days before you occupy the building. You must also tell us that the work is finished within 5 days of completion.

We will send you a full plans completion certificate following a completion inspection, providing all building regulation fees have been paid, we judge that the work to be complete and, as far as can be ascertained by visual inspection, there are no contraventions of the building regulations. You should keep the completion certificate in a safe place, as you will need it if you sell the property in the future.

Making changes to your application

If you wish to change the work to the building either on site or by changing your approved drawings, you should notify us of the change as soon as you can. The work on site and on the drawings should normally be the same. If you wish to make a change, we will work with you and your builder and architect or building surveyor. We need to assess any amendments to an approved plan, so you will need to send us updated drawings and then we will send your agent an amended approval.

Note if any work differs from your planning approval, you should contact Belfast Planning Service to discuss this.

Notes about other permissions

These applications are only for the building regulations. You may need other permissions for your planned work (for example planning permission) and you should contact the relevant authority. Here are some of the authorities you may need to contact for permission.

Planning applications – Belfast Planning Service:
Phone: 028 9050 0510 – www.belfastcity.gov.uk/planning

Water connections – Northern Ireland Water:
Phone: 034 5744 0088 – www.niwater.com

Listed buildings or dwellings in a conservation area – Historic Buildings and Monuments:
Phone: 028 9082 3177 or 028 9082 3126 – www.communities-ni.gov.uk

Further assistance

If you need any help or advice, please phone us on 028 9027 0650 or visit www.belfastcity.gov.uk/buildingcontrol. We also have a surveyor on duty each afternoon (between 2pm-5pm on Monday-Thursday or 2pm-4:30pm on Friday) who can help with technical queries, if you phone us or come into our customer reception in The Cecil Ward Building.

Place and Economy
Building Control
Belfast City Council
Cecil Ward Building
4-10 Linenhall Street
Belfast BT2 8BP

 028 9027 0650
 buildingcontrol@belfastcity.gov.uk
 www.belfastcity.gov.uk/buildingcontrol