

Change of use of a building or part of a building



Everything you need to know:

It's common to want to convert a building, or part, from one use to a different purpose. With dwellings this may vary from converting a garage to a habitable room, to dividing a house into flats. However it is not always as straight forward as it may seem and this is where your Local Authority Building control Team can help! Below are some helpful tips and things to be aware of!

What should you consider?

Do I need Planning Permission for a change of use? Sometimes, planning requirements differ from the Building Regulations; it's best to contact the planning team to find out.

Do I need Building Control permission for a change of use? Are you considering carrying out conversion work to a dwelling, part of it, or an outbuilding? Do you wish to change a building into a dwelling?

The following information is for the most common situations a home owner will encounter.

The Building Regulations have a specific definition for "Change of use" and an Application is required, regardless of whether any work is intended, or even needs to be carried out. Change of use includes –

1. Building is a dwelling, where previously it was not;
2. Building contains a flat, where previously it did not;
3. Building is used as a hotel or boarding house, where previously it was not;
4. The building is used as an institution, where previously it was not;
5. Building was previously exempt;
6. Building which contains at least one dwelling, contains a greater or lesser number of dwellings than previously;
7. Building is used as a shop, where previously it was not.

Change of use also applies to a part of the building, as well as the whole building.

So if you wish to do any of the above you will need to make an application. You may be required by the Regulations to do work, even if you had not considered it e.g. provide fire safety features, sound insulation, energy ratings.

Is converting part of your property a change of use? Often you can convert space within a dwelling without this being a change of use because it remains a dwelling. Typical examples include making non-habitable spaces into living areas, e.g. loft/attics, garages, conservatories, outbuildings. However this is still work that requires a Building Regulations application.

If you use all or part of your home for different purposes is this a change of use? For more modest operations probably not, such as office work in the study or "kitchen table" business. But there are areas that are more open to interpretation. Having a lodger may be fine, but having a number of paying residents, would be considered a hotel/boarding house.

This is not a definitive list and cannot encompass every possible variation on a theme. It is important to take appropriate professional advice when you are thinking about a project, before starting work. For a comprehensive assessment of your proposals it is best to have a dialogue with your Local Authority Building Control team. We are here to help guide through the process.

On successful completion you will receive a certificate of compliance to keep safe should you ever sell your property.

Still have a query? Did you know that we do offer 1 hours free pre application consultation for those who need it. Contact us today at building.control@east Suffolk.gov.uk / 01502 523072