

Alterations and extensions

Guidance for homeowners

The Buildmark policy document for your home has the exclusion:

'NHBC will not be liable for anything affecting or caused by alterations or extensions to the Home carried out after the date of the Insurance Certificate'.

We recommend that you read this guidance carefully if you are planning an alteration or extension.

What is an alteration or extension?

An **alteration** is building work carried out to your home. Examples of alterations include:

- removing an existing wall or partition
- replacing windows or doors or adding new ones
- laying a patio or substantially altering ground levels around your home
- work to drainage, plumbing and electrical services
- installation of additional insulation to cavity walls.

An **extension** is building work, which provides additional space. Examples of extensions include:

- additional rooms, including rooms in the roof
- a conservatory
- a porch
- a garage.

Why you need to be careful

Unless proper care is taken, extensions and alterations can damage or adversely affect your home. This could include:

- damage to the foundations - excavating close to existing foundations can undermine or damage them
- damage to drains - excavating close to drains or building over them can cause damage. It is also important that access points, such as rodding points and manholes are not covered over. They are there to allow access for maintenance and to clear blockages
- damage to other services, including water and gas pipes and the electrical supply
- bridging damp proof courses - damp proof courses are there to prevent dampness. It is important that they are not damaged or bridged
- dampness through external walls - the external walls of your home have been designed to keep moisture out. Alterations, including adding insulation to cavity walls can affect their resistance to moisture
- structural damage to load-bearing walls, floors and roofs - your home has an integrated load bearing structure and it is important that any alterations or extensions do not adversely affect this structure. It may not be obvious which parts of your home provide structural support to other parts
- affecting access - alterations and extensions may make your home less accessible for disabled visitors and less suitable for existing and future occupiers as they grow older
- affecting fire safety - your home was built to meet fire regulations and allow you to escape safely if a fire were to occur. Alterations or extensions should take account of this

- damaging gas or vapour control membranes - some walls, floors and ceilings have gas tight layers in them to stop gas or moisture vapour. It is important that they are not damaged
- damage to separating walls and floors - the walls and floors, which separate you from your neighbours are designed to provide resistance to sound and fire. It is important that any work carried out does not reduce their effectiveness. In England and Wales work on separating walls and floors may be subject to the Party Wall etc. Act
- blocking ventilation - there may be ventilation to ground floors, walls and roofs to prevent the build-up of moisture, to provide combustion air for the safe operation of heating appliances, or to prevent gases building up. It is important that ventilation is not covered over or blocked
- covering over or blocking flue terminals - for the safe operation of heating appliances, it is important that flue terminals are not covered over, blocked or modified.

NHBC's advice

- **Always seek appropriate professional advice**
A professional building surveyor, structural engineer or architect should be able to provide sound advice on alterations and extensions and guide you through all of the related technical and legal issues
- **Obtain the necessary approvals**
Contact your local authority to find out whether the work that you are considering requires Planning Permission or Building Control approval. Some works may also require permission from your landlord
- **Use competent contractors**
Use reputable firms, recommended to you by others.

Electrical alterations should be carried out by a professional electrician. The National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC) and the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA) keep registers of approved firms.

Work on the gas installation in your home should only be undertaken by a CORGI (Council of Registered Gas Installers) registered installer. Use installers registered with the following organisations for work on or associated with gas, oil or solid fuel appliances:

- CORGI (Council of Registered Gas Installers) for gas appliances.
- OFTEC (Oil Firing Technical Association for the Petroleum Industry) for oil fired appliances.
- HETAS (Heating Equipment Testing and Approvals Scheme) for solid fuel appliances.

Useful information

Building Regulations Explanatory Booklet (for England & Wales)
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Free Literature
PO Box 236, Wetherby, LS23 7NB
Tel: 0870 1226 236
Fax: 0870 1226 237
www.odpm.gov.uk

Building Standards - Your questions answered (for Scotland)
Scottish Executive, Development Department, Building Standards Division,
Victoria Quay, Leith, Edinburgh
Tel: 0131 244 7442

(In Northern Ireland, you should contact your local authority for advice on Building Regulations)

The Party Wall etc. Act 1996: explanatory booklet
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Free Literature
PO Box 236, Wetherby, LS23 7NB
Tel: 0870 1226 236
Fax: 0870 1226 237
www.odpm.gov.uk



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