

Do I need planning permission for common home improvements?

Many home improvements in England can be carried out as 'permitted development' without a full planning application. This guide covers four popular projects and explains when permission may still be needed.

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QUICK ANSWER

Many common home improvements in England can be carried out as 'permitted development', meaning no planning application is needed. However, restrictions apply to your specific property, so always confirm with your local planning authority before starting any work.

KEY FACTS

Governing legislation

GPDO 2015

Flats and maisonettes benefit from householder PD rights?

No — check with your LPA

Can PD rights be removed locally?

Yes, by Article 4 Direction

Larger rear extensions: prior notification needed?

Yes, via neighbour consultation scheme

In planning terms

Permitted development — Certain classes of building work are granted planning permission automatically under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPDO 2015), without the need to submit a planning application to your local planning authority.

Common misconception: permitted development covers all houses automatically

Permitted development rights are not universal. They can be restricted or removed by an Article 4 Direction, a planning condition attached to a previous permission, or because your property sits in a designated area such as a conservation area. Always check your own property's status before starting work.

Common projects

Single-storey rear extension

A single-storey rear extension may be permitted development in England if the Class A limits and conditions are met.

Loft conversion

A loft conversion or dormer may be permitted development in England if the Class B limits and conditions are met.

Garden outbuilding

An outbuilding, garden room, or detached garden office may be permitted development in England if Class E limits are met.

Solar panels

Domestic solar panels may be permitted development in England if limits and conditions are met.

How permitted development works

The GPDO 2015 grants planning permission for certain defined classes of householder development, so you do not need to submit a planning application for work that falls within those classes and meets all applicable conditions. However, permitted development is not a blank cheque: each class comes with specific limits and conditions, and your proposal must comply with all of them.

For larger single-storey rear extensions that go beyond certain limits, householders must notify the local planning authority and go through a neighbour consultation scheme before work can begin; the authority must confirm whether prior approval is required, or a set period must pass without a decision, before construction starts.

Where permitted development rights may not apply

Even where a project would normally be permitted development, your rights may be limited or removed entirely. It is important to check before you start.

- Flats and maisonettes do not benefit from normal householder permitted development rights; check with the LPA.
- An Article 4 Direction issued by the local planning authority can remove permitted development rights for all or part of its area.

- Properties in conservation areas may face additional restrictions on what can be done as permitted development.
- Where a property is a listed building, listed building consent is a separate regime from planning permission, and curtilage is fact-sensitive; additional consent may be required.
- Permitted development rights may have been removed by a condition attached to the original or a later planning permission for your home — this is common on newer housing developments.

Check before you start

1. Confirm your property type

Householder permitted development rules apply to houses, not to flats, maisonettes, or certain converted buildings.

2. Check for Article 4 Directions and planning conditions

A local planning authority can restrict or remove permitted development rights through an Article 4 Direction or a planning condition; check with your LPA before starting work.

3. Look up designations affecting your property

Properties in conservation areas or that are listed buildings may face restrictions beyond standard permitted development rules; listed building consent is a separate regime.

4. Seek pre-application advice

It is wise to contact your council's planning service before starting; they can tell you whether your project is lawful as permitted development or whether a planning application is needed.

Permitted development rights allow householders to improve and extend their homes without the need to apply for planning permission where that would be out of proportion with the impact of works carried out.

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government — Permitted Development Rights for Householders: Technical Guidance

Frequently asked questions

Not sure whether your project needs permission?

Use the Planning Portal's interactive guidance to check common projects, or contact your local planning authority for pre-application advice before you start work.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the difference between permitted development and planning permission?

Planning permission must usually be applied for and granted by your local planning authority. Permitted development is a form of planning permission granted automatically by national legislation — currently the GPDO 2015 — for certain defined classes of work, so no application to the LPA is needed, provided all conditions and limits are met.

Do I need planning permission to add a single-storey rear extension?

A single-storey rear extension can often be carried out as permitted development, but the proposal must meet all the relevant conditions. Larger extensions that exceed certain limits are not refused outright, but do require prior notification through a neighbour consultation scheme before work can begin. Your property's specific circumstances may differ, so check with your LPA.

Can I build a garden shed or outbuilding without planning permission?

Garden outbuildings — including sheds, garages, greenhouses, and similar structures for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the house — are considered permitted development subject to limits and conditions relating to position, height, roof type, and how much of the garden area is covered. Use as separate self-contained living accommodation is not covered.

Do permitted development rights apply to my flat?

No. Flats and maisonettes do not benefit from normal householder permitted development rights. If you live in a flat or maisonette and want to carry out works, you should check with your local planning authority about what permissions may be required before starting any work.

What is an Article 4 Direction and how does it affect me?

An Article 4 Direction is a measure a local planning authority can use to withdraw permitted development rights in a specific area or for a specific type of development. If one applies to your property, work that would normally be permitted development will instead require a planning application. Check with your LPA to find out whether your property is affected.

SOURCES

- [GOV.UK — When is permission required?](#)
- [GOV.UK — Permitted development rights for householders: technical guidance](#)
- [Planning Portal — Outbuildings: planning permission](#)
- [National Planning Policy Framework \(2024\)](#)
- [Single storey rear extension — rear extension](#)
- [Loft dormer conversion — loft conversion](#)

- [Outbuilding garden room office — outbuilding](#)
- [Domestic roof or wall solar — solar panels](#)