

How to check whether your home improvement project is permitted development in England

Many standard home improvements in England may qualify as 'permitted development', meaning no planning application is needed. This guide walks you through the five checks every homeowner should carry out before starting work.

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QUICK ANSWER

Many standard householder improvements in England may be permitted development under the GPDO 2015, requiring no planning application — but flats and maisonettes are excluded from normal householder permitted development rights entirely.

KEY FACTS

Governing legislation

GPDO 2015

Applies to flats and maisonettes?

No — contact LPA

Lawful Development Certificate required?

Optional, not mandatory

Stricter rules on Article 2(3) land?

Yes — confirm with LPA

Is this guide right for you? Check here first

Flats and maisonettes do not benefit from normal householder permitted development rights — if your home is a flat or maisonette, stop here and contact your local planning authority. If your property is on Article 2(3) land — which includes conservation areas, National Landscapes (legally still Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty / AONBs), National Parks, the Broads, and World Heritage Sites — stricter rules apply and some works that would otherwise be permitted development will require a planning

application. If an Article 4 direction has been made in your area, specified permitted development rights will have been withdrawn and a planning application will be needed for the affected works. Listed building? Listed building consent is a SEPARATE requirement from planning permission, and many works to a listed building need it regardless of whether permitted development rights technically apply — always check with your LPA before relying on permitted development.

1. 1

Identify exactly what work you are planning

Begin by writing a clear description of your proposed project — for example, a single-storey rear extension, a loft conversion, a new outbuilding, or alterations to a roof. Note the location of the proposed work in relation to the main house and to your plot boundaries. Where possible, prepare a simple sketch plan showing the proposed work alongside any existing structures on the site. Having a precise picture of what you intend to do is essential before you can compare your plans against permitted development rules, and it will also be useful if you decide to seek pre-application advice from your LPA.

2. 2

Check whether restrictions affect your property

Before going any further, establish whether any of the following apply to your property, as each one changes what is — and is not — permitted development. Your LPA can confirm which restrictions are in force. First, confirm whether your home is a house (including a bungalow or terraced house) rather than a flat or maisonette — flats and maisonettes are excluded from these rights entirely. Second, check whether your property lies within Article 2(3) land: this includes land within a conservation area, a National Landscape (legally still an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty / AONB), a National Park, the Broads, or a World Heritage Site, all of which attract stricter permitted development conditions. Third, find out whether an Article 4 direction has been made — this is a direction under article 4 of the GPDO 2015 by which the Secretary of State or the LPA can withdraw specified permitted development rights across a defined area. Fourth, check whether any conditions attached to an earlier planning permission for your property have removed or restricted permitted development rights. Fifth, if your property is a listed building, note that listed building consent is a separate consent regime from planning permission, and many works will require it in addition to any permitted development rights that may exist.

3. 3

Compare your project against the relevant permitted development limits and conditions

Householder permitted development rights are set out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPDO 2015). Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Order sets out the rules concerning what enlargements, improvements, alterations, and additions a householder may make to their house and the area around it without the need for a planning application. Each class of development — for example, Class A covering rear extensions, Class B covering roof additions, Class C covering other roof alterations, and Class E covering outbuildings — has its own limits and conditions. The Government has produced 'Permitted development for householders — technical guidance', available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), which explains these rules in detail and how they should be applied. Read it carefully and assess whether your proposed work falls within the limits and satisfies the conditions for the relevant class. Where there is any doubt, seek advice from your LPA rather than assuming the work is permitted.

4. 4

Use the Planning Portal and contact your local planning authority to confirm your case

The Planning Portal (planningportal.co.uk) provides guidance on common householder projects and is a useful starting point for understanding how permitted development rules may apply to your circumstances. However, national guidance cannot account for every variation in individual house design, local conditions, or local restrictions, and the Planning Portal itself makes clear that its guidance is introductory and not a definitive source of legal information. It is therefore wise to contact your LPA directly and seek pre-application advice on your specific proposal. Your LPA may charge a fee for this service. Bringing a clear description of the proposed works and any sketches you have prepared will help the planning officer give you a more informed response. Remember that informal pre-application advice from a planning officer does not constitute a formal decision on whether your development is lawful.

5. 5

Consider applying for a Lawful Development Certificate for legal certainty

If you want formal legal certainty that your proposed work is lawful and does not require a planning application, one option is to apply to your LPA for a 'lawful development certificate' (LDC). Under section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, a local planning authority can grant a certificate confirming that a proposed use or development would be lawful for planning purposes. Once granted, the certificate means the proposed development in accordance with it must be presumed lawful, subject to there being no material change before the work begins. An LDC is optional — it is one way of obtaining certainty, not a mandatory step. You may choose to proceed without one, particularly where your LPA has given clear pre-application advice, but be aware that an LDC provides a level of formal protection that informal advice does not. Further information on the process is available in the planning practice guidance on lawful development certificates on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

When permitted development rights do not apply at all

In some circumstances, householder permitted development rights simply do not apply, meaning a full planning application is required regardless of the nature or scale of the proposed work. It is important to identify these situations at the outset to avoid carrying out development without the necessary permission.

- Your home is a flat or maisonette — householder permitted development rights do not apply to buildings containing one or more flats or a single flat contained within a building.
- Your property is on Article 2(3) land and the proposed work falls within a class that is excluded or further restricted on that land, such as certain side extensions or outbuildings in conservation areas or National Landscapes (legally still AONBs).
- An Article 4 direction has been made withdrawing the specific permitted development right you wish to rely on — in that case, a planning application is needed, although an Article 4 direction does not mean development will necessarily be refused, only that it must go through the application process.
- A planning condition attached to a previous permission for your property has restricted or removed relevant permitted development rights.

Where there is any doubt as to whether a development would be permitted development, advice should be sought from the local planning authority. To be certain that a proposed development is lawful and does not require an application for planning permission, it is possible to apply for a lawful development certificate from the local authority.

Permitted development for householders — technical guidance, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Common householder projects at a glance

Common projects

Single-storey rear extension

May be permitted development under Class A of Part 1, GPDO 2015, subject to limits and conditions — confirm with LPA

Loft conversion

May be permitted development under Class B of Part 1, GPDO 2015, subject to limits and conditions — confirm with LPA

Outbuilding or garden structure

May be permitted development under Class E of Part 1, GPDO 2015; stricter rules apply on designated land and within the curtilage of a listed building — confirm with LPA

Front porch

May be permitted development under Class D of Part 1, GPDO 2015, subject to conditions — confirm with LPA

Roof alteration (not a loft conversion)

May be permitted development under Class C of Part 1, GPDO 2015, subject to conditions — confirm with LPA

Flat or maisonette — any work

Normal householder permitted development rights do not apply — contact LPA about a planning application

Frequently asked questions

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does permitted development apply to my listed building?

Permitted development rights can technically apply to listed buildings in some circumstances, but listed building consent is a wholly separate requirement under its own consent regime. Many works to a listed building — including internal and external alterations — will require listed building consent regardless of whether permitted development rights exist. Always check with your LPA before carrying out any work to a listed building.

What is an Article 4 direction and how do I find out if one affects my home?

An Article 4 direction is made under article 4 of the GPDO 2015 by the Secretary of State or the local planning authority to withdraw specified permitted development rights across a defined area. It does not prohibit development outright — it means a planning application is needed instead. Your LPA can tell you whether any Article 4 directions apply to your property and which rights have been withdrawn.

Is a Lawful Development Certificate the only way to be certain my work is lawful?

No. A Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) is one way of obtaining formal legal certainty that a proposed development is lawful for planning purposes. It is optional, not a mandatory step. Pre-application advice from your LPA and careful comparison of your project against the GPDO 2015 and its technical guidance are also valuable, though they do not carry the same formal weight as a granted certificate.

SOURCES

- [Permitted development for householders — technical guidance \(MHCLG\)](#)

- [Planning Portal — Householder permitted development overview](#)
- [Planning practice guidance — Lawful development certificates \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Planning Portal — Building regulations overview](#)
- [Planning Portal — Disclaimer and terms](#)
- [Permitted development for householders — technical guidance \(full text, GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Planning practice guidance — When is permission required? \(Article 4 directions section\)](#)
- [Permitted development for householders — technical guidance: further restrictions](#)
- [Planning practice guidance — Article 4 directions \(NPPF context\)](#)
- [GPDO 2015 — Schedule 1: Article 2\(3\) and Article 2\(4\) land definitions](#)
- [GPDO 2015 — Article 4: Directions restricting permitted development](#)