

When Do I Need Planning Permission?

The following guide gives very basic scenarios in which you may or may not require planning permission. In every instance it is essential to confirm with your Planning Officer whether your particular plans require planning permission as individual areas or properties may have special restrictions applied to them. If you have appointed a quality contractor they will be able to advise you based upon their experience of dealing with similar contracts and may even complete the Planning Application on your behalf.

Changing the buildings use?

As a general rule, if you intend to change use of your building within the same class, no planning permission is required. So if your building is being used as a post office you would not require planning permission to start using the building as a hairdresser. Both of these premises would be Class A1. If however, you wanted to change from running a Post Office to a Public House then you would be changing from Class A1 to Class A4 and planning permission would be required.

It is important to outline however that even if you are changing use within the same Class, if you are making changes to the exterior of the property then planning permission will almost certainly be required. See below appendix:

A1 Shops

Shops, post offices, travel agents, hairdressers, funeral directors, internet cafés, dry cleaners (but retail warehouse clubs are excluded).

A2 Financial and professional services

Banks, building societies, betting offices, and other financial and professional services provided mainly to visiting members of the public.

A3 Restaurants and cafés

Use for the sale of food and drink for consumption on the premises.

A4 Drinking establishments

Use as a public house, wine-bar or other drinking establishment (but not a night club).

A5 Hot food takeaways

Use for the sale of hot food for consumption off the premises.

B1 Business

Offices, research and development, light industry appropriate in a residential area.

B2 General industrial

B8 Storage or distribution

This Class includes open air storage.

C1 Hotels

Hotels, boarding and guest houses where no significant element of care is provided.

C2 Residential institutions

Residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres.

C3 Dwellinghouses

Family houses, or houses occupied by up to six residents living together as a single household, including a household where care is provided for residents.

D1 Non-residential institutions

Clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries, museums, libraries, halls, places of worship.

D2 Assembly and leisure

Cinemas, concert halls, bingo and dance halls (but not night clubs or casinos¹), swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums or sports arenas (except for motor sports, or where firearms are used).

Extending Existing Premises?

Generally you will always need planning permission if you plan to extend your shop or office. If however you are extending a factory or a warehouse and the extension is within the curtilage (land immediately surrounding a property) you may be able to extend the property under General Permitted Development.

As always it is advisable to check with your Planning Officer before commencing works to ensure that you are abiding by all the required regulations.

For factory or warehouse extensions, planning permission isn't normally required if:

- Your extension is less than 1000 square meters of floor space.
- Is also less than 25% of the volume of the original building.
- Is also below the height of the original building.

For factory or warehouse extension, planning permission is required if it:

- (a) Changes the appearance of the building.
- (b) Is within five meters of the site boundary.
- (c) Reduces the volume of available parking/turning area.

Regulations calculate 'volume' from external measurements. 'Original' means as first built, or as the building stood on July 1st 1948. The allowance total is usable once and any previous enlargement of the building counts against this total.

Building New Premises?

Simply put, if you are proposing to build new premises you will almost certainly require planning permission.

Making structural alterations internally?

If you intend to make alterations to structural walls or if you intend to add or subtract window or door openings or reduce access to disabled persons, in any way, you will be required to gain planning permission prior to making these changes.

How you implement these changes will then be governed by Building Regulations and by your Local Building Control Officer.

External Alterations/Shopfronts/External Lighting/Air Conditioning Units

Although planning isn't required if you are changing the use of premises within the same class, for example, from a shoe shop to a post office, the required changes, for example, to the exterior of the premises will require planning permission. Even if a shop front is remaining largely unchanged if there are changes to its external lighting, planning permission will almost certainly still need to be sought.

Give your Planning Application the best chance

At Office Changes we partner with our Local Area Building Control (LABC). Partnering with one LABC allows us to make planning and building control applications on behalf of our clients in one area, to one department regardless of where we are undertaking works on behalf of clients.

By partnering we remove the unknown elements of applying to a different authority in a different area. We have got to know our local Officers and have built strong relationships. Some contractors simply ignore planning permission requirements, or are even ignorant to them. Ask your contractor if you need planning permission and ask if they partner with an LABC. Make sure you are comfortable that your contractor is abreast of these matters and can apply the appropriate requirements and condition, made by law, to your project.

What happens if I don't get Planning Permission?

If you don't obtain planning permission, where it is required, you may risk having to make costly, disruptive changes to your project further down the line or even face the chance of having your project rejected, in which case non-compliant elements will have to be dismantled and rebuilt in order to then comply with the permissions and regulations applicable to your project.

Ultimately it is your responsibility to gain planning permission. Ensure you employ a contractor with the skills and capabilities which will safeguard your project and avoid unforeseen costs, penalties or legal problems.

Who Can Help?

At Office Changes Ltd we have over 12-years experience successfully helping organizations make improvements to their environment, including, extensively Planning and Building Control applications. To avoid wasted time and unnecessary expense contact Office Changes to discuss your planning application requirements. Call us free on 0808 155 5682 for a friendly initial discussion or email

help@officechanges.com.