



## **Guidance Document:**

# **Building Regulations and Basement Conversion in Residential Dwellings**

**April 2020**

## Introduction

This guidance note has been formulated by the Property Care Association in order to highlight the importance of the building regulations and supporting approved documents. It is important all members are aware of the document to ensure compliance. This document is in no way intended to be a comprehensive guide to the building regulations, but purely to help provide a brief overview of some of the key building Approved Documents that are applicable during basement conversions in residential dwellings.

The Approved Documents provide practical guidance on potential ways to achieve compliance with the requirements of the regulations in England. We will highlight the applicable Approved Documents which give guidance on each of the technical parts of the regulations.

Full versions of the Approved documents can be downloaded free from:

[https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200135/approved\\_documents](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200135/approved_documents)

Please note that this guidance note solely looks at the conversion of existing basements into habitable space. A more comprehensive guide on the building regulations and how they influence new build basement design is available at: [https://www.concretecentre.com/Publications-Software/Publications/Guidance-Documents-Basements-for-dwellings-\(1\).aspx](https://www.concretecentre.com/Publications-Software/Publications/Guidance-Documents-Basements-for-dwellings-(1).aspx)

In addition, building regulations should not be confused with planning permission or listed building consent.

## When do Building Regulations become applicable?

If adding a room for residential purposes, then the building regulations will become applicable. Exceptions may apply depending on the use of the building, for example, plant rooms not visited by people. If unsure, you should always consult a building control body who will provide advice when the regulations apply. This can be via either the Local Authority or an Approved Inspector.

A more practical list of the meaning of building work, as defined under Regulation 3 of The Building Regulations 2010, can be found at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/2214/regulation/3/made>

Responsibility for ensuring that the work complies with all applicable requirements of the building regulations falls to those that carry out the building work. This includes the designers, installers and the building owners. It is common practice that the building contractor will liaise with the building control body to confirm the timings of their inspections.

## Approved Document B – Fire Safety in Dwelling houses

This was last revised in 2019 and covers precautionary measures necessary to provide safety from fires for building occupants, persons in the vicinity of buildings and firefighters.

The effect that this document will have on basement conversions will be dependent on the intended use. Basements being designed to habitable grade should have one of the following:

- a. An emergency escape window or external door providing escape from the basement” to ground floor level, ensuring any such opening may well need to be guarded to stop people falling into the well.

b. “A protected stairway leading from the basement to a final exit.”

In addition, Approved Document B may influence the choice of internal linings to prevent internal fire spread - particularly the ceiling areas within the basement, which may need to be upgraded to be fire resistant.

In some circumstances a basement should be separated from the rest of the house using an FD20 fire door.

Mains operated and interlinked smoke detectors may be required to the ground floor hallway and first floor landing. If the basement becomes a kitchen, a heat detector should be provided.

### **Approved Document H – Drainage and Waste Disposal**

This document will be applicable in relation to any drainage of Type C Systems, but also any land drains that maybe used within the waterproofing system.

### **Approved Document L1b – Conservation of Fuel and Power in existing dwellings**

This document sets out the requirements of the building fabric to prevent heat loss and may influence the requirements of insulation to the ceiling, walls and floors within the basement conversion. In addition, for grade three environments where appropriate ventilation, de-humidification or air conditioning are required, this document sets out the requirements to prevent energy loss. Most insulation manufacturers provide U-value calculations to show compliance with current Building Regulations / Standards and best practice. These can be supported with a detailed report.

The new basement should be fitted with lighting that is energy efficient.

### **Approved Document F – Means of Ventilation**

Basements by their very nature will have reduced rates of air exchange and in basements which are habitable, greater emphasis is placed on the need for the provision of adequate ventilation. For basements with a large permanent opening, ventilation should be classed as part of the whole dwelling. However, properties with an isolated basement may require special consideration and might need to be considered a separate entity to the remainder of the property.

Further guidance on distinguishing between atmospheric moisture and ground water issues in basements can be found in the: **PCA Code of Practice for Waterproofing of Existing Underground Structures** ([https://www.property-care.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Best-Practice-Guidance\\_Type-B-Waterproofing-Systems.pdf](https://www.property-care.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Best-Practice-Guidance_Type-B-Waterproofing-Systems.pdf)) and the discussion paper **Considering Ventilation and Air Management in Basements as part of an Overall Waterproofing Strategy** ([https://www.property-care.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/SW-DP-VAMBasements-0217-v1\\_web.pdf](https://www.property-care.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/SW-DP-VAMBasements-0217-v1_web.pdf)) .

## Approved Document E – Resistance to the Passage of Sound

Walls between domestic dwellings are required to have a certain resistance to the passage of sound. This Approved Document sets out the acceptable limits and may also be applicable for deciding the make up between floors of the same building. Compliance with Robust Detailing, as referred to in Part E, may also be acceptable in new houses and flats.

## Approved Document P – Electrical Safety

This Document will be applicable for connecting pumping systems and any subsequent electrical wiring. These works should always be undertaken by suitably qualified persons.

**Note: Power points, cables, light switches, pipes and any other services must be remounted in front of the membrane in type C systems.**

## Background to this Guidance Note

This guidance note was developed by the members of the Property Care Association for the purpose of increasing understanding of applicable building regulations during basement conversions. The views expressed here articulate a consensus view among consultants, contractors and manufacturers within the specialist structural waterproofing industry in the UK. The PCA develops technical guidance as and when required by our members through the use of voluntary working groups. Working groups are made up of PCA technical staff and member representatives from across the sector and technical staff. It is highly likely that it will be your responsibility to ensure that Building Regulations are followed and sign off is provided. If in doubt consult either the Local Authority or an Approved Inspector.

This guidance note is subject to a review in April 2022.

*The information contained in this document is given in good faith and believed to be correct. However, it must be stressed that of necessity it is of a general nature. The precise condition may alter in each individual case and the Association is therefore unable to accept responsibility for any loss howsoever arising from the use of the information contained therein.*

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