

BUILDING CONTROL SERVICES INFORMATION SHEET

REPLACEMENT WINDOWS TO EXISTING DWELLINGS

I thought replacing windows did not need Building Regulations consent ?

For many years, it has not been necessary to apply for Building Regulations consent when replacing windows in existing dwellings unless a structural alteration was involved. This usually only occurred when the existing opening was being made wider, which made the installation of a new support lintel necessary.

1. What do I have to do ?

You have a choice you can either -

1. Use an installer registered under the FENSA scheme run by the Glass and Glazing Federation, in which case you do not need to make a Building Regulations application to the Council. Your installer should then ensure your windows fully comply with the Regulations and will supply you with a certificate confirming this when the installation is complete. If you wish to use this option please ensure that your installer is properly registered under the scheme before placing an order. You can check this and find more details of the scheme by visiting the Glass and Glazing Federation website at www.ggf.org.uk
2. Make a Building Regulations application, and in most cases the simplest way of doing this will be to submit a Building Notice. You must complete the Building Notice form, and return it to us together with the appropriate charge **at least** two working days before removing the old window(s).

Once we receive the Building Notice, a Building Control Officer will visit your property. If all is found to be satisfactory, a completion Certificate will be issued to confirm this. You may well be asked by your solicitor to produce this certificate if you sell your property, so please follow carefully the guidance given in this information sheet to ensure that a certificate can be issued to you.

2. How much will it cost ?

If you use a contractor registered under the FENSA scheme, the cost should be built into the quotation for the works you are given. In all other cases, the Council will make a charge for dealing with your Building Notice application based on the total cost the work. The Council will be able to tell you the charge for your scheme.

3. What regulations do the windows have to comply with ?

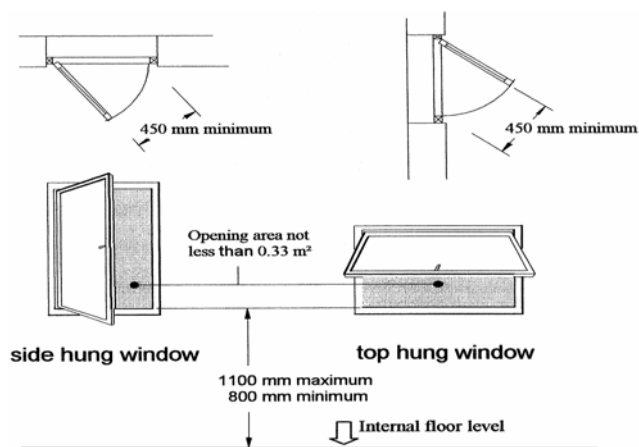
Thermal insulation.

The replacement windows will need to meet the new thermal insulation requirements. If the replacement windows have wooden or plastic frames, then the glazing needs to achieve a maximum U-value of 2.0 W/m² K, while for metal frames a slightly higher U-value of 2.2 W/m² K is allowable. ***Please note that these values are very difficult to achieve and many double glazing units currently on sale will not meet these new standards.*** Take great care when ordering new windows that your supplier can **prove** the glazing units used will satisfy this requirement, as the Building Control Officer will need to see proof before issuing a completion certificate. We would particularly recommend that you leave any labels on the glazing in place until a satisfactory inspection has been carried out by the Building Control Officer.

In some cases, it may be permissible to use glazing units which do not meet the above specification, but to do so you (or your supplier) would have to submit calculations to prove that the overall insulation requirements of the regulations would still be met. This may be possible if other insulation measures are undertaken at the same time as the window replacement - for example; installing cavity wall insulation or 'topping up' loft insulation. The benefits gained by installing this extra insulation can be used to offset the higher losses through the glazing, but this must not be undertaken lightly. We would strongly recommend that you get any such calculations checked by the Building Control Officer well before the replacement windows are installed, so that any expensive mistakes can be avoided.

Means of escape.

All first floor windows in dwelling should ideally have opening lights large enough to allow you to escape through them if you were trapped in the room by a fire. This also applies to rooms in bungalows, which open into a hall (unless the hall itself has an external door through which you could escape). To meet this requirement, all such windows should have an unobstructed openable area of at least 0.33 m² and be at least 450 mm x 750 mm in either direction. The bottom of the openable area should not be less than 1100 mm above the floor.



If your existing windows do not have opening lights which meet the above requirements, we would strongly recommend for your own safety, that you take the opportunity to provide them in the replacement windows. It is recommended that the new replacement windows are made no worse than those that they replace. Where the existing windows already have opening lights which are larger than the above requirements, those in the new windows can be reduced in size provided that they are not reduced to less than the dimensions above.

Safety glazing.

Low level glazing i.e., glazed areas with 800 mm of floor level and glazing in doors within 1500 mm of floor level should generally be of the type so that if broken, it will break safely. In practice this means such glazing should be laminated or toughened glass. Ordinary glazing can still be used in small pane sizes, however, provided the glass is sufficiently strong to resist breakage. The Approved Document to Part N of the Building Regulations gives maximum sizes according to the thickness of glass, e.g., in a single pane less than 1.1 m² - 8 mm glass would be satisfactory.

Structural safety.

If the replacement windows are wider than those they replace, or involve the replacement of bay windows, then the Building Control Officer will need to be satisfied that proper structural support is provided above the window. In older buildings, the timber frame of the window was often sufficiently strong to carry the load of a wall or roof above it without a lintel. Obviously in these cases, a lintel needs to be installed when the window is replaced, or the new frame carefully reinforced to carry the load.

Ventilation.

The Building Regulations require that adequate ventilation is provided for the occupants in the building and this should be considered when deciding on the size of the opening lights in the replacement windows. For most rooms, one or more opening windows equalling 5% of the floor area, with background 'trickle' vents of 8000 mm² will be adequate. For kitchen, utility rooms and bathrooms an extract fan is also normally required. In some cases, the existing windows may contain a permanent vent to supply combustion air to a heating appliance, although this is now rare. If this is the case, however, you should ensure that the replacement window contains a similar permanent vent, or that some other means of providing the required ventilation is installed at the same time.

5.

For further advice on the requirements of **Building Regulations** in respect of replacing windows, please contact:

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