



Relaxing permitted development rights for home extensions

What you need to know

As part of the Planning Reform Proposals the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has released a consultation “Extending permitted development rights for homeowners and businesses”. The consultation proposes to increase permitted development (PD) rights for extensions to houses and business premises in non-protected areas in England, as well as streamlining the regime covering the installation of broadband infrastructure. Any proposed changes would be made by amending the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (SI 418)*.

A copy of the full consultation published on 13 November can be found <http://tinyurl.com/permitdevelcons>

The consultation runs until **24 December**. Already, there has been opposition from a wide range of sectors including local government, architects, planners and the civic movement, as well as in the media.

Background

In September 2012, Prime Minister, David Cameron announced the proposed changes as another approach to help support economic growth. The original media story can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/cfupdt>

In announcing the current consultation, recently appointed Planning Minister Nick Boles MP said: *“These proposed reforms will make it easier for thousands of hard working families to undertake home improvements to cater for a growing family or to build a conservatory.*

Summary of consultation

The Department for Communities and Local Government is proposing the following:

- ☞ Increasing the size limits for the depth of single-storey domestic extensions from 4m to 8m for detached houses and from 3m to 6m for all other types of dwellings in non-protected areas. Currently this relaxation is set to be in place for a period of three years. No changes are proposed for extensions of more than one storey.
- ☞ Increasing the size limits for extensions to shop and professional/financial services establishments to 100m², and allowing the building of these extensions up to the boundary of the property in non-protected areas, with the exception of where the boundary is with a residential property. This too is set for a period of three years.
- ☞ Increasing the size limits for extensions to offices to 100m², in non-protected areas, for a period of three years.
- ☞ Increasing the size limits for new industrial buildings within the curtilage of existing industrial premises to 200m², in non-protected areas, for a period of three years.
- ☞ Removing some prior approval requirements for the installation of broadband infrastructure for a period of five years.

The consultation paper also said the Government want to explore whether there is scope to use permitted development to make it easier to carry out garage conversions.

The text of the consultation confirmed that the requirements of other regimes – such as building regulations, the Party Wall Act or environmental legislation – would not be removed.

Permitted development

DCLG estimates that up to 40,000 families a year will benefit from the proposals, with suggested savings on professional fees and the production of scaled drawings adding to £150 savings in planning fees. They

hope that, these reforms will, for a limited time period, reduce planning red tape, sweep away unnecessary rules and bureaucracy and help tens of thousands of homeowners and businesses.

The consultation makes clear that existing protections of amenity for neighbours remain unchanged – so height limits of 4m will apply and any extension with an eaves height greater than 3m cannot be within 2m of the boundary. Building Regulations, the Party Wall Act and 'rights to light' all apply as normal, as does the limit of 50% of the curtilage of the house. So the change essentially allows the same permitted extensions as before, but stretching up to twice the distance allowed at the present time, garden size or space permitting.

In September the Royal Institute of British Architects published the results of a YouGov survey it had commissioned. This survey found that more than half of respondents believed that the extensions policy would see the design quality of neighbourhoods get worse. Civic Voice believe the short-term policy could pave the way for poor design decisions that could damage the built environment for years to come. <http://tinyurl.com/ribasurvey>

Non-protected areas

The DCLG have said the new rights will not apply in protected areas such as National Parks, conservation areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest and would not remove the requirement for separate listed building consent.

Removing prior removal

The Government are also consulting on a decision to allow broadband providers to implement broadband infrastructure without the need for prior approval from the local planning authority for a five-year period.

Further reading

Civic Voice's original press release on this subject <http://tinyurl.com/agmvote>
David Cameron Statement <http://tinyurl.com/cfupdt>

Civic Voice thoughts

Firstly the concept on an 8 metre long extension on the back of a house sounds bold. However the total ground area covered must be less than 50% on the available land at the time the house was built - and remember all previous additions including garden sheds are included.

The proposals will save householders £150 in planning application fees along with indirect savings on transaction costs such as professional fees, production of scaled drawings and time spent compiling and presenting information. The estimated total savings on the planning application process is up to £2500 depending on the level of information required to support the application. If the requirement to seek planning permission were removed these costs would no longer be incurred so there are likely to be some schemes that may see huge savings, where many smaller schemes will see little difference.

The Minister originally promised 8 weeks to a Department for Communities and Local Government Select Committee but has now been set as a six-week period consultation period. This is not an ideal time of the year for organisations, including Civic Voice, in the lead up to the festive season, to consult with civic groups and other stakeholders appropriately or to a full extent. In our response to the Government we will raise this issue and emerging culture of reduced consultation period by Government. What makes this short time frame even more interesting is the fact that the Government announced the proposed changes in September.

Ways to take action

-  Contact your MP via the Civic Voice e-campaign toolkit <http://tinyurl.com/a57m7td>
-  Respond to the consultation direct at <http://tinyurl.com/permitdevelcons>
-  Send the campaign letter to all your friends and contacts at
-  Contact your newspaper asking people to join your group
-  Join the Civic Voice on-line debate at <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/forums/viewthread/1704/>
-  Send examples of how these proposals may affect to info@civicvoice.org.uk