NI Planning Permission

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FREE GUIDE · NORTHERN IRELAND

House Extensions & Permitted Development in Northern Ireland

Rear extensions, loft conversions, porches, garden buildings and certainty before you build

What a householder can build without a planning application under the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015, where those rights are restricted, what the council looks at when permission is needed, and how a Certificate of Lawfulness gives formal certainty.



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INTRODUCTION

Do I need planning permission?

Under section 23 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, building work and material changes of use are "development", and development needs planning permission. For houses, much of that permission is granted in advance by the **Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015** (the "GPDO"): this is known as **permitted development**.

1
Is it development?
Works affecting only the interior, or which do not materially affect the external appearance, are not development (s.23(3)(a)).

2
Is there a class?
Part 1 of the GPDO Schedule sets out Classes A to I for dwellinghouses, each with limits and conditions.

3
Is it restricted?
A planning condition, a listed building, a conservation area, an AONB or a road safety issue can remove or narrow the rights.

In this guide

01 Rear and side extensions: Class A limits 3
02 Roofs, porches, garden buildings and other works 4
03 When you need permission, and what the council assesses 5
04 Practical checklist and common pitfalls 6
05 How NI Planning Permission helps 7
06 Sources 8

WHO DECIDES?

Householder applications are decided by your local council (one of the 11 in Northern Ireland). Permitted development rights are the same across Northern Ireland, but the planning policy used when permission *is* needed depends on whether your council has adopted its own Plan Strategy (see our guide to the 11 councils).

Permitted development rights apply to houses ("dwellinghouses"). nidirect confirms that extending or adding to a **flat or maisonette**, creating a separate home within or in the garden of a house, and works not allowed by the original permission for your house all need a planning application.

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KEY RULES · PART 1, CLASS A

Extensions and alterations: the Class A limits

Class A covers the enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a house. An extension is **not** permitted development if any of the following apply:

Limit	Summary of the GPDO wording (Class A.1)
Garden coverage	Buildings (other than the original house) would cover more than **50%** of the curtilage, excluding the ground area of the original house.
Height	Higher than the highest part of the existing roof, or eaves higher than the existing eaves.
Road-facing walls	Extends beyond a wall that faces onto a road and forms the principal or a side elevation of the original house.
Single storey to the rear	Projects more than **4 m** beyond the rear wall (detached house) or **3 m** (any other house); over **4 m** high; or within 3.5 m of a boundary with a road opposite the rear wall.
More than one storey	Projects more than **3 m** beyond the rear wall, or is within **7 m** of the boundary opposite the rear wall.
Near a boundary	Within 2 m of any boundary with eaves higher than 3 m.
Side extensions	Beyond a side wall and over 4 m high, or wider than half the width of the original house.
Excluded works	Roof alterations (see Class B), decks, balconies, verandas or raised platforms, basements, chimneys, flues and soil pipes, microwave antennas.
Listed buildings	Within the curtilage of a listed building, unless listed building consent has already been granted.

Conservation areas, AONBs and World Heritage Sites (Class A.2)

The Order also lists a National Park, none of which is designated in Northern Ireland. In these areas an extension is not permitted development if it involves exterior cladding (stone, render, timber, tiles and similar), has more than one storey or exceeds 4 m in height, or extends beyond the principal or a side elevation.

Conditions (A.3): materials must be of similar appearance to the existing house (conservatories excepted); upper-floor side windows within 15 m of a neighbouring curtilage must be obscure glazed and non-opening below 1.7 m; two-storey extensions should match the original roof pitch where practicable. **"Original"** means the house as it stood on 1 October 1973, or as first built if later (GPDO article 2), so earlier extensions count.

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KEY RULES · OTHER CLASSES

Roofs, porches, garden buildings and other works

Works (GPDO class)	Main limits in summary
Roof additions, dormers (Part 1, Class B)	No higher than the existing roof; no more than 15 cm beyond the plane of a road-facing principal or side roof slope; at least 0.5 m from ridge, eaves, party wall or verge; **not permitted in a conservation area**; side windows within 15 m of a neighbour obscure glazed.
Porch (Class C)	Up to 3 m² ground area; up to 3 m high (flat or mono-pitch) or 3.5 m (dual pitch); not within 2 m of a boundary with a road.
Garden buildings, sheds, pools (Class D)	For purposes incidental to the house, not living accommodation; total coverage 50% rule; not forward of a road-facing principal or side wall; max 4 m high; eaves max 2.5 m within 2 m of a boundary. Tighter limits in AONBs, conservation areas and World Heritage Sites.
Hard surfaces (Class E)	Between the front wall and a road, over 5 m² must be porous or drain to a permeable area.
Oil or LPG tank (Class F)	Up to 3,500 litres and 3 m high; not forward of a road-facing wall; extra limits in conservation areas.
Microwave antennas (Class G)	Generally up to two antennas, with size and siting limits (a single antenna up to 100 cm; where there are two, only one over 60 cm; 60 cm on a chimney; not above the roof or chimney); tighter rules on road-facing elevations in designated areas.
Chimneys and flues (Class H)	Not more than 1 m above the highest part of the roof; restrictions on road-facing elevations in designated areas.
Decking (Class I)	No part more than 0.3 m above ground; not forward of a road-facing principal or side wall.
Solar panels (Part 2, Class A)	No more than 20 cm proud of a roof slope that faces onto and is visible from a road; not above the ridge; not more than 1.5 m above the plane of a flat roof; extra limits in conservation areas and World Heritage Sites.
Walls, fences, gates (Part 3, Class A)	Up to 1 m beside a road used by vehicles; up to 2 m elsewhere.
EV charge points (Part 3, Classes D and E)	Wall-mounted outlets and upstands in a lawful off-street parking area, with size and siting limits.

ALWAYS CHECK THE GENERAL LIMITS TOO

Permitted development does not override a planning condition on your house (GPDO article 3(4)), and it does not cover works that create or alter an access onto a special, trunk or classified road, or that obstruct a driver's view at a bend or junction (article 3(5)). The 2026 amendment to the GPDO (S.R. 2026 No. 80) concerned reverse vending machines at shops and did not change the householder classes.

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WHEN PERMISSION IS NEEDED

Making a householder application

If your plans go beyond permitted development, you apply to the council. The council must decide the application in accordance with the local development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (sections 6(4) and 45 of the 2011 Act).

What the council assesses

In the five council areas without an adopted Plan Strategy, the retained **PPS 7 (Addendum): Residential Extensions and Alterations**, Policy EXT 1, applies alongside the SPPS. It supports an extension where:

- its scale, massing, design and materials are sympathetic to the house and the surrounding area;
- it does not unduly affect the privacy or amenity of neighbours;
- it does not cause the unacceptable loss of, or damage to, important trees or landscape features; and
- enough space remains for recreation, domestic use, parking and turning.

Where a council **has** adopted its Plan Strategy, its own policy applies instead. For example, Antrim and Newtownabbey's Plan Strategy includes **Policy DM 22 Residential Extensions and Alterations**. As of November 2026, six councils have adopted Plan Strategies: Antrim and Newtownabbey, Belfast, Derry City and Strabane, Fermanagh and Omagh, Lisburn and Castlereagh, and Mid and East Antrim.

Formal certainty without an application

> **Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development (CLOPUD)**
> Under section 170 of the 2011 Act you can ask the council to certify that proposed works would be lawful, for example because they are permitted development. The lawfulness is then conclusively presumed unless something material changes before the works begin. The fee is **half** the fee for the equivalent planning application (Planning (Fees) Regulations, reg. 12(3)(c)).

Statutory fee (in operation from 1 April 2025)	Amount
Householder application: extension, improvement or alteration of an existing house, or works in its curtilage (Schedule 1, category 4)	**£347** per dwelling
Where permitted development is removed only by a condition or an Article 4 direction (reg. 7 and 8)	**£78**

Source: Planning (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2025. Some disabled-access works are exempt (reg. 4). **Check the current fee** with the council or the Planning Portal fee calculator before you apply.

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PRACTICAL CHECKLIST

Before you build

- [ ] Planning history of the house checked on the public register
- [ ] Original permission checked for conditions removing permitted development
- [ ] Listed building, conservation area, AONB and World Heritage Site status checked
- [ ] Previous extensions since 1 October 1973 measured
- [ ] 50% garden coverage calculated
- [ ] Depth, height, eaves and boundary distances measured from accurate drawings
- [ ] Road-facing elevations identified (corner plots!)
- [ ] Side windows within 15 m of a neighbour planned as obscure glazed
- [ ] Materials chosen to match the house
- [ ] Access, sightlines and parking unaffected
- [ ] CLOPUD considered for certainty
- [ ] Building Control approval arranged separately

Common pitfalls

- ✕ **Assuming English rules apply.** Northern Ireland has its own GPDO; figures you read online for England or the Republic of Ireland are different.
- ✕ **Forgetting the road.** A side or front wall facing a road changes what is permitted, which often catches corner sites.
- ✕ **Ignoring earlier extensions.** Limits are measured from the *original* house, so a previous owner's extension may have used up the allowance.
- ✕ **Balconies and raised decks.** These are excluded from Class A, and decking over 0.3 m high needs permission.
- ✕ **Flats and maisonettes.** Part 1 rights do not apply; extensions need a planning application.
- ✕ **Converting a garden building into a bedroom or annex.** Class D does not cover use as a separate dwelling.
- ✕ **Building first and asking later.** Retrospective applications are possible, but the council may take enforcement action if the works are unacceptable. A short check before you start is far simpler.

> **Planning is not Building Control**
>
> Permitted development only answers the planning question. Most extensions and loft conversions also need Building Regulations approval from the council's Building Control service.

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HOW WE HELP

A clear answer for your house

Most householder questions can be answered quickly with accurate measurements and a check of the planning history. Where permission is needed, a well-prepared application avoids delay.

1. **Permitted development check.** We review your plans against the GPDO classes, your property's history and any designations.
2. **Certificate of Lawfulness.** Where certainty matters, for example for a sale or a lender, we prepare the CLOPUD application and evidence.
3. **Householder application.** We prepare drawings, forms and a short planning statement addressing EXT 1 or your council's own policy, and liaise with the case officer.
4. **Revised schemes.** If a council raises concerns, we advise on design changes and resubmission.

PO

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Planning an extension?

Send us your address and a sketch or photos of what you have in mind, and we will tell you whether it is likely to be permitted development or need an application, and what the council will look for.

Request a site-specific assessment → niplanningpermission.co.uk/contact-us

Or call 028 9591 6888 · info@niplanningpermission.co.uk · Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

CONTACT NI PLANNING PERMISSION

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Important: This guide is general guidance on the planning system in Northern Ireland. It is not legal advice and does not replace advice on your own site. Planning law, policy and fees change; the content is believed correct at the date of publication (November 2026), and you should check the current position with the relevant council before relying on it. No outcome can be guaranteed: every application is decided by the council on its own merits.

SOURCES

Official sources used

All sources were checked in November 2026. Legislation links point to the revised (current) text on legislation.gov.uk.

- **Planning Act (NI) 2011, s.23 (meaning of development)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/25/section/23
- **Planning Act (NI) 2011, s.6 (local development plan)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/25/section/6
- **Planning Act (NI) 2011, s.45 (determination of applications)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/25/section/45
- **Planning Act (NI) 2011, s.170 (certificate of lawfulness of proposed use or development)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/25/section/170
- **Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (NI) 2015, Schedule Part 1 (dwellinghouses)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/70/schedule/part/1
- **GPDO (NI) 2015, article 2 (interpretation, incl. 'original')**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/70/article/2
- **GPDO (NI) 2015, article 3 (permitted development and its limits)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/70/article/3
- **GPDO (NI) 2015, Schedule Part 2 (domestic microgeneration)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/70/schedule/part/2
- **GPDO (NI) 2015, Schedule Part 3 (minor operations)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/70/schedule/part/3
- **Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2026, S.R. 2026 No. 80**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2026/80/made
- **PPS 7 (Addendum): Residential Extensions and Alterations**
  https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/PPS07%20%28Addendum%29%20Residential%20Extensions%20and%20Alterations%20.pdf
- **DfI: Retained Planning Policy (PPSs retained under the SPPS)**
  https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/retained-planning-policy
- **DfI: Strategic Planning Policy Statement, Edition 2 (December 2025)**
  https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/strategic-planning-policy-statement
- **Planning (Fees) Regulations (NI) 2015 (as amended)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/73/body
- **Planning (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2025, S.R. 2025 No. 49 (in operation 1 April 2025)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2025/49/pdfs/nisr_20250049_en.pdf
- **DfI: Planning fees**
  https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-fees
- **nidirect: Planning permission, when to apply**
  https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/planning-permission-when-apply
- **nidirect: Finding a listed building**
  https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/finding-listed-building
- **nidirect: Conservation areas and advice**
  https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/conservation-areas-and-advice
- **Antrim and Newtownabbey BC: LDP 2030 Plan Strategy document (Policy DM 18 Homes in the Countryside; DM 22 Residential Extensions)**
  https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/residents/planning/local-development-plans/plan-strategy-2030/
- **NI Planning Portal: public planning register**
  https://planningregister.planningsystemni.gov.uk/

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