

The Garden Rooms & Outbuildings Guide

When garden rooms need permission, and the limits that catch people out.

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In this guide: your approval routes, what trips people up, what it costs, how long it takes, a checklist you can work through, and answers to the questions we are asked most.

1. Your approval routes

Route	When it applies	What you submit
Permitted Development	Single-storey, incidental use, within height and area limits	Lawful development certificate advised
Full Planning	Sleeping accommodation, separate dwellings, designated land	Full application with drawings
Building Regulations	Larger buildings, sleeping use, some electrical work	Technical drawings where applicable

2. What trips people up

- Within 2m of a boundary the overall height cap is usually 2.5m, which is the single most common trip-up.
- Outbuildings must be incidental to the house. Anything you sleep in changes the position entirely.
- Conservation areas and Article 4 directions reduce or remove permitted development rights.
- Coverage matters: outbuildings must not take up more than half the land around the original house.

3. What it costs

Typical UK market ranges, so you can sanity-check any quote you receive. Exp|Arc quotes one fixed written price after a free route check, and flags the third-party costs below up front.

What	Typical UK range	Who it is paid to
Planning drawings	£1,200 – £2,500	Your drawing practice
Full set incl. Building Regs	£2,500 – £5,000	Your drawing practice
Council application fee	£548 (householder, England, from April 2026)	Local authority
Structural engineer	£700 – £2,000	Engineer, where structure changes
Measured survey	Up to £450, or £0 with a guided self-survey	Surveyor

4. How long it takes

Stage	Typical time
Free planning-route check	Same working day

First draft drawings	10 working days
Revisions until you are happy	Unlimited, usually 1 to 2 rounds
Council decision	6 to 8 weeks from validation
Building Regulations set	1 to 2 weeks after approval

5. Your checklist

- ☐ Measure the distance to every boundary
- ☐ Confirm the intended use is incidental
- ☐ Check conservation area and Article 4 status
- ☐ Check total garden coverage
- ☐ Plan power, insulation and drainage
- ☐ Get the position confirmed in writing before buying a building

6. Questions people ask

Do I need permission for a garden office?

Usually not, if it is single storey, within the height limits for its position, and used as an office rather than accommodation.

Can I sleep in it?

That normally takes it outside permitted development and into a full planning application, and it engages Building Regulations.

What if it is close to the fence?

Within 2m of a boundary the height limit drops to about 2.5m overall, which rules out most pitched roofs.

Get your free planning-route check

Send your postcode and what you are planning. You get the route confirmed in writing, the drawings you need, and one fixed price, usually the same working day. If any application we submit is refused, you get a 100% refund within 5 days.

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