

The Loft, Garage & Basement Guide

Head heights, the staircase trap, and the approvals that make a conversion work.

Editable Word version and our other guides: exparc.co.uk/free-guides

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	Lofts within volume limits that keep the roof shape	Lawful development certificate advised
Full Planning	Dormers on the front, terraced homes, conservation areas	Full application with drawings
Building Regulations	Every conversion, without exception	Technical drawings and building control notice

2. What trips people up

- 2.2m at the ridge is the practical benchmark, and floor build-up plus insulation can take 0.3m of that before you start.
- Stairs are the hidden £5,000 to £10,000 problem: 2.0m headroom, 1.9m and 1.8m on sloped runs, and a 42° maximum pitch.
- Trussed roofs need structural work to open up, which changes both cost and drawings.
- A garage conversion still needs damp, insulation and ventilation to comply, even when no planning is required.

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
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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 ridge height in several places
- ☐ Plan the staircase before the layout
- ☐ Check permitted development limits for your house type
- ☐ Allow for insulation and floor build-up
- ☐ Confirm the roof structure
- ☐ Commission a Building Regulations set
- ☐ Book building control inspections

6. Questions people ask

Is my loft tall enough?

Send us the ridge height and we will tell you honestly. Where it is tight, a dormer or hip-to-gable usually solves it, and we say so before you spend on design.

Do I need planning permission for a dormer?

Rear dormers are often permitted development within volume limits. Front dormers and terraced properties are far more likely to need a full application.

Can a garage conversion be done without approval?

Building Regulations always apply. Planning permission often does not, but we confirm your position in writing first.

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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General information for UK projects, not planning advice for a specific property. Limits and local policy vary, so always confirm your position before committing. Exp-Arc Limited, company no. 16980239, 167–169 Great Portland Street, 5th Floor, London W1W 5PF.