



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

# Approved Document A

## Frequently Asked Questions



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## Timber sizes for floor joists

Where can I obtain the timber sizes for floor joists and roofing members that are no longer directly contained in the current version of Approved Document A?

This information is contained in the guidance document published by the Timber Research and Development Association (TRADA) titled:- 'Span tables for solid timber members in floors, ceilings and roofs (excluding trussed rafter roofs) for dwellings', obtainable from:

TRADA Technology Ltd,  
Chiltern House  
Stocking Lane  
Hughenden Valley  
High Wycombe  
Buckinghamshire  
HP14 4ND

Or alternatively technical guidance is given in British Standard BS 8103 Part 3 2009 'Structural design of low-rise buildings – Code of practice for timber floors and roofs for housing', obtainable from:

British Standards Institution  
389 Chiswick High Road  
London  
W4 4AL

## How do I go about applying for Building Regulations Consent in retrospect?

I have recently moved into a three bedroom house which has had a loft room constructed. Building Regulations Consent was not obtained before doing this work though we are informed that the works conform to the required standards. How do I go about applying for Building Regulations Consent in retrospect? I know that planning permission was not required.

You will need to contact your local authority Building Control office and apply for a Regularisation Certification for this 'unauthorised building work'. This could be very disruptive as some of the covered building work may need to be exposed, e.g. to verify the size of a steel beam or the spacing and size of floor joists.

## What needs to be done to create a basement in an existing or new house?

Basements require both Planning Permission and Building Regulations approval whether constructed as part of a new property or as a retrofit to an existing property. You will need to consult your Local Authority Planning and Building Control offices

The Basement Information Centre publishes a useful industry guide 'Basements for dwellings' on basement design and construction and they can be contacted at the following address:

The Basement Information Centre  
Riverside House  
4. Meadows Business Park  
Station Approach  
Blackwater  
Camberley  
Surrey  
GU17 9AB  
[www.basements.org.uk](http://www.basements.org.uk)

## Single storey extension foundations

I plan to build a small single storey extension and I have been advised by the local building control authority that the foundations must be dug to a minimum depth of 2.5metres rather than the 1.0 metres set out in the plans. The reason given for this is the nearby mature Lombardy poplar trees. I do not have a tree in my garden but there is a large tree next door. I am told a piling system may be required. My reason for writing is to ask whether it is routine and part of the regulations to require foundations to be dug so deep.

Poplar trees do have a high water demand and can potentially cause serious problems to foundations in shrinkable clays and soil which are highly plastic. The type of sub-soil in your area is of vital importance in this matter. Also the proximity of any trees or large shrubs and their species (water demand, root spread, height, etc) is relevant to the design of foundations.

Mini piles will usually be an economic solution as they are quick to place and there is less spoil to dispose of and also less foundation concrete will be used.

An alternative approach would be to construct a rigid reinforced raft foundation which can ride on any ground movements. However, due allowance must be made for the likely differential movements between the extension and the dwelling.

The National House Building Council Technical Standards and also the Building Research Establishment publish information on foundation design for various sub-soil situations.

## Can you tell me if a conservatory can be erected on top of a first floor extension?

This has happened on a property near us and consequently we have lost our privacy.

It is possible to build a conservatory on top of an extension provided:-

1. Local Authority Planning Permission has been granted

2. Local Authority Building Control are content with respect to all the relevant parts of the Building Regulations. Conservatories at first floor level are not exempt from the Building Regulations.