

Planning Approval vs Building Regulations

Permission vs Protection – why both matter before you build.

Getting planning approval is a big milestone – but it is not technical readiness. Many homeowners assume that once planning is granted, construction can begin. In reality, planning only confirms that a proposal is acceptable in principle. It does not address structural safety, regulatory compliance or construction coordination. Understanding this distinction prevents delay, redesign and avoidable cost. Before work starts, a project must move from approved concept to technically defined build package. That transition is where professional clarity matters most.

PLANNING APPROVAL

Controls what you are *allowed* to build.

Planning focuses on how your proposal affects the outside world. Local authorities assess:

- Size and scale
- Visual appearance
- Impact on neighbours
- Privacy and overlooking
- Street scene and character
- Access and highways

Planning asks: “Should this be built?” Planning drawings are typically layout-led and visual. They demonstrate intent and policy compliance. They **do not** confirm:

- Structural integrity
- Insulation performance
- Fire safety compliance
- Drainage design
- Trade coordination
- Detailed specificatio

Planning is *permission* — not technical approval.



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BUILDING REGULATIONS

Control how it *must* be built.

Building Regulations are legal standards governing construction safety and performance They cover:

- Foundations and structural design
- Steelwork and load paths
- Fire safety and escape routes
- Insulation and energy efficiency
- Ventilation and drainage
- Electrical safety
- Stair design and guarding

Building Regulations ask: “Is this designed and built correctly?” Compliance is mandatory – even if you have full planning approval. Where planning looks outward at impact, Building Regulations look inward at performance.

Planning manages context. Regulations manage safety and durability.

TECHNICAL DRAWINGS

When Does This Happen?

After planning approval, drawings are developed into a technical construction package. This typically includes:

- Structural calculations
- Building Regulations detail
- Drainage and services coordination
- Specification definition

Only once these elements are in place is the project considered build-ready.

PARTY WALL AGREEMENTS

If you are excavating within **three metres** of a neighbour’s foundations, or working on a shared wall – a Party Wall Agreement may be required.

Handled early, it is usually straightforward and protects both parties by recording property condition before work begins

IN SUMMARY

Planning asks: “**Is this acceptable?**”

Building Regulations ask: “**Is this safe and compliant?**”.



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