

Agricultural buildings into residential houses

What is class Q permitted development?



The Government has recently introduced the permitted development (PD) rights known as the Class Q that allow for the conversion of existing agricultural buildings into houses. This brings a lot of opportunities for self-builders and small building companies.

The old barns can be updated to the higher valued properties. However, there are some limitations. The old barns can be turned into new houses but it is necessary to submit a Prior Approval application. The

local planning authority has the opportunity to assess the case and make a request for more detailed information if required.

It is important to keep in mind that the Class Q does not apply to barns in the conservations areas, national parks or listed barns, scheduled ancient monuments or sites of special scientific interest.

The barn must have been in the agricultural use before 20th March 2013 and the building must be capable of alterations without the need for structural changes. Class Q allows for changes necessary to convert the residential building including building of exterior walls, replacement of roof coverings, insertion of doors and windows, connection of services, drainage, electricity and gas connections. The structure of the existing barn has to be strong enough to

take necessary loading to support the external works. Under the Class Q the partial demolition can be accepted but the external dimensions of the building has to remain untacked. The extension to the existing barn is not acceptable. Moreover, there is the additional condition that the garden adjacent to the new dwelling must be no larger than the floor area of the house. It is not possible to add new foundations, load bearing floor slabs or first floor.

For those who are looking to convert the existing agricultural unit, there is unfortunately a little obstacle as the maximum number of barns that can be converted must not exceed five. In most cases the size and number of existing barns will be determining factor. In addition, there are two classes of barn conversion with different maximum floor space limit:



- large dwellings defined as residential conversions between 100m² and 465m² in size. Class Q allows for three such dwellings to be created with total cumulative maximum floor space of 465m².
- Small dwellings classed as residential units not exceeding 100m² each, with maximum of five and no more than total cumulative floor space of 500m².
- The maximum floorspace that can be converted into residential use is 865m².

To obtain the necessary permission it is necessary to submit a Prior Approval application under Class Q. The application form and any advice can be obtained in the local planning authority. The additional documents include the location plan, a site plan including the garden, parking and access arrangements. The drawings of the proposal and of the existing building have to be attached. More details could be required including full structural survey, details of the external appearance or transport and highways matters, noise impacts of the development, flooding risks, etc.

It is possible to apply for the permission on extension after the barn was converted to residential dwelling and such application will be considered under the standard rules.

Class Q is the broad and quite complicated building regulation with still many restrictions but it gives the excellent opportunities for creative, modern design. The Government's Rural Planning Review announced in 2016 is underway and it will impact Class Q permitted developments rights.

