

Enlargement or reduction of window openings when installing replacement windows and doors

This Best Practice guide has been produced to assist local authorities to determine when a building regulation application is required for work relating to the replacement of doors and windows when changing the size of the opening in any way.

Most Building Control bodies are aware that if you enlarge a window opening by increasing its width you will usually require a new lintel and a Building Regulations application is clearly required for the associated structural work. However, what has not been as widely recognised is that an application is also required where the enlargement of the opening is downwards as the work is considered to be “building work” in accordance with Regulation 3(1)(b) *‘The provision or extension of a controlled service or fitting in or in connection with a building’*. This having been a requirement since 1st April 2002 by virtue of Regulation 2 (1) where “controlled service or fitting” means a service or fitting in relation to which Part G, H, J, L or P of schedule 1 imposes a requirement.

The requirement to submit an application extends to those people who are members of a competent person scheme for replacement of windows as the CPS only cover replacement of windows where they are the same size as originals.

The following points are some areas where control may need to be exerted.

1. Enlargement of the window/door opening could cause conflict with energy efficiency requirements when based on the glazed area in relation to floor area (Regulation L1).
2. Unprotected areas in boundary situations could become excessive (Regulation B4).

3. Reduction in window size could also adversely affect means of escape where the window is an escape window (Regulation B1).
4. Where a window is reduced in size, the ventilation area could be compromised (Regulation F1).
5. There may be issues with requirements for safety glass, or shielding for protection from impact manifestation or guarding where this was not previously (Regulation N1, N2).
6. In exceptional cases a hazard could be formed on an escape where previously it was not required due to the lowering of the window. This could require a kerb or solid barrier to allow detection by a cane. (Regulation M1).
7. Safety glass or shielding for protection from impact could be required where previously it was not required due to the lowering of the window.
8. The illustration below shows how by the removal of the structure below the original window area a short pier can become a thin isolated pier which can cause a structural problem both between openings and in a corner situation, this could also be a problem where this wall is a buttressing wall (Regulation A1).

