

Removing a wall

Technical guidance

The Sussex Building Control technical guidance notes offer help and advice to homeowners who are unfamiliar with the Building Control system, Building Regulations and The Approved Documents.

They highlight areas that should be considered before you start work. If you are in any doubt about the suitability of your proposed project then you should seek advice from a professional such as a surveyor, architect or builder.

You may also wish to download a copy of our User Guide 'Extending, Converting or Improving your Home - Your Guide to Building Control' which provides clear, step by step guidance on how to make an application, how to determine the fee payable and other permissions you may require.

Other guidance can be found at www.communities.gov.uk or www.planningportal.gov.uk and we recommend that you contact the Development Control Department to find out if you need to obtain planning permission for your project.

Planning Department Horsham North Area - 01403 215165

Planning Department Horsham South Area - 01403 215190

Crawley Planning Department - 01293 438512

If you are thinking about reconfiguring the ground floor of a typical two-storey house (with no basement or loft conversion) by removing a wall there are two important aspects of the Building Regulations which must be considered.

1. The structural stability of the work, and
2. The safety of the occupants in the event of a fire.

Structural stability

If the wall to be removed is loadbearing then it is essential that Building Regulation consent is obtained prior to starting work. Loadbearing means:

- a) an external wall, or
- b) a wall supporting other loads such as floors, walls or roof supports.

Loadbearing walls are often constructed in brick or block but may also be timber stud. Identification of loadbearing walls in older properties built of masonry can be relatively straightforward and a surveyor, architect, engineer or builder should be able to give you advice after making a simple visual inspection.

In the case of timber framed buildings however, it is often not possible to readily identify loadbearing elements until a considerable amount of work has been uncovered. Even then, the original design may be based on all the walls contributing to the overall structural stability of the dwelling. A timber stud wall should be treated as loadbearing, unless there is positive evidence to the contrary.

The table overleaf may be used to determine the size of RSJ required in most cases when forming an opening in a brick or block wall. Padstones will also be required and are detailed in the table.

Case	Span	RSJ	Padstone
1	Up to 1.8m	127 x 76 x 13kg	300 x 100 x 150 deep
2	1.8m to 2.4m	152 x 89 x 16kg	450 x 100 x 225 deep
3	2.4m to 3.0m	178 x 102 x 19kg	450 x 100 x 225 deep
4	3.0m to 3.5m	203 x 102 x 23kg	600 x 100 x 225 deep

If you select other sized steel beams or your project falls outside the limits of application you will be required to provide structural calculations.

Fire protection

Any beam will require cladding to achieve 30 minutes fire resistance. A common method is to clad the beam with two layers of 12.5mm plasterboard securely fixed to a self-supporting timber frame or a plasterboard manufacturers system.

Fire separation

If the wall to be removed opens an existing staircase to a habitable room (eg. wall between the hallway and living room to create an open plan arrangement) then you are worsening the existing means of escape and need to make an application for Building Regulation consent even if the wall is not loadbearing.

In this situation it is important to provide additional measures to compensate for the new arrangement. Such measures would include:

1. Every bedroom and/or study must have a window suitable for escape. When opened, this window must provide a clear opening size of 750mm high by 450mm wide the cill height should not exceed 1100mm from floor level. It is important that there is no obstruction directly below these windows such as a conservatory. It is possible to interconnect the habitable rooms with a standard door.
2. Mains powered self contained smoke alarms should be provided in all the circulation areas. If more than one detector is required they should be interlinked.



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Sussex Building Control provide building control services on behalf of

