

# **Access to building control records and copy documents**

## **West Suffolk building control**

## **Access to records and copy documents**

This guide has been designed to provide support to homeowners and/or their representatives wishing to enquire about building regulation records and obtain copies of documents to assist in the sale and/or refinancing of properties.

West Suffolk building control provides online access to a limited area of the building control database.

This allows anyone to search for building regulations applications that have been made for a property and have either started on site or been completed. The facility will also find information on other types of work which has taken place at the property such as work undertaken by competent persons or applications submitted by approved inspectors.

You can access building control records online via our website

[www.westsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Public access does not constitute a full property history as far as the building regulations is concerned.

If you wish to conduct a search for a property then you can;

- Request a con29 conveyance search of the property, which will reveal details of building control applications received by the council. Please contact land charges directly.
- Request a historical property search, which reveals all building control applications received for the property that we have available, there is a charge for this service.

Your search will reveal the application status and whether a copy of a completion certificate is available to purchase.

## **Understanding public access**

Personal search companies - The information on public access for building control records will only show applications that have either commenced, are pending consideration or completed. All applications have a unique reference which denotes what type of work is being undertaken. Some application types do not result in a completion certificate being issued.

## **Competent person work**

These are notifications from the scheme providers and there aren't any documents available through us, you will have to contact the relevant scheme provider for copies of certificates if required.

For more information about the current competent person schemes and their contact details refer to the competent person register at

[www.competentperson.co.uk](http://www.competentperson.co.uk)

## **Completion certificates**

A completion certificate or building regulations approval/consent is a legal document issued once building control have inspected and approved a completed project subject to a building control application. It is also a vital document when attempting to buy or sell a property as it proves the building work carried out has been approved and it complies with the legislation of the time.

Completion certificates were introduced for building regulations applications in the late-1980s and 1990s. Even then however, solicitors generally did not consider building regulations approvals in property searches during conveyancing, particularly if alterations were more than 12 months old. However, in the case of *Cottingham v Attey Bower & Jones* [2000], this practice was judged to be negligent. Subsequently, it has become very important to obtain a completion certificate, or there may be difficulties in selling a property.

Completion certificates became a requirement where buildings were within the scope of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (that is, for non-domestic buildings and blocks of flats). For other properties, completion certificates were only issued if they were requested.

However, in December 2012, The Building Regulations etc (Amendment) Regulations 2012 were introduced. This amendment removed the need to request a completion certificate from a local authority and instead required that where a local authority is satisfied that works meet the building regulations, it must give a completion certificate. It also requires that completion certificates are issued within 8 weeks. (ref. Communities and Local Government Circular 02/2012 19 December 2012)

It is important to ensure that a completion certificate is sought as failure to do so is now likely to emerge during local land search enquiries when a property is sold and this can cause difficulties.

A completion certificate will only be issued if the work has been completed satisfactorily, all necessary inspections have been conducted and all fees have been paid. We may not be able to issue a completion certificate where building work has been complete or ongoing for a significant amount of time.

## **Historical property search**

If you want us to reveal building control applications which are not indicated on a local search then you will need to request a historical property search for building regulations, although this is not guaranteed. There is a fee for this service.

## **Exemption certificates**

We sometimes receive requests to confirm that some building work is exempt under the building regulations, normally this is to assist when selling a house. We are able to offer an exemption letter to confirm that works, as described by the applicant, were exempt from building regulations at the time they were carried out. There is a charge to cover the cost of assessing the submitted information and producing the correspondence.

## **Viewing files and plans**

Unlike planning applications there is no general public right to inspect plans deposited under the building regulations. However, as the owner of a property we do allow you or your representative to examine previously submitted plans where, for example, you are doing so in order to help prepare an application under the building regulations.

This access is subject to a nominal fee to owners of the property and a higher charge for accessing this information for commercial purposes. Please contact us to discuss the options.

Plans are always protected under copyright and therefore copies cannot be provided without the express permission of the architect/author. There is also a charge for any associated costs and we cannot guarantee the quality of any prints once they are printed.

## **Document retention policy**

Property and record completed prior to June 2022 - records kept 30 years from date of completion inspection then records deleted.

Property and record completed after June 2022 - records kept 15 years from date of completion inspection then records deleted.

All records not complete and 3 years from date of last requested inspection – file archived.

Please note not all historic records are available due to changes at the local authority and its systems over the years.

## **Miscellaneous charges**

Fees and charges which are set within the statutory frameworks relating to building regulations are issued separately.

All charges listed are inclusive of vat at the rate of 20% (where appropriate) effective from date of this document.

## **Item**

### **Copy of building regulation decision or completion certificate**

£40 plus vat - to professionals for commercial purposes or owners/buyers within 10 working days

£60 plus vat - to professionals for commercial purposes or owners/buyers within 2 working days (if practically possible)

### **Re-open archived applications where no request for inspection made within 3 years**

£40 plus vat - response within 10 working days

£80 plus vat - per site inspection required to complete archived records including issue of completion certificate. Note, it may not be possible to issue a completion certificate for works that have been ongoing for a significant period of time. This will be at the building control inspectors discretion.

### **Historical property Searches for all Building Regulations information relating to a property**

£40 plus vat - response within 10 working days

### **Responses to professional letters for commercial purposes**

£60 plus vat - response within 10 working days

### **Exemption confirmation letter or email**

£40 plus vat - response within 10 working days if no site visit required, or an additional £80 plus vat to include site visit.

To request a completion certificate or a historical property search please email [building.control@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:building.control@westsuffolk.gov.uk) with your details and requirements.

Whilst we try to respond within these times this service cannot be guaranteed and is subject to availability. The above prices include vat.