



## Philippa Rudd Brief-Case



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### Loft conversions

**We live in a terraced house in the city. We can't afford to move house but we need more space and are thinking of converting our loft into living accommodation. What do we need to know, please?**

Your solicitors should check your title deeds for you to see if there are any restrictive covenants that might prevent the conversion works (this is unlikely). You should also check to see if you need the consent of your mortgage company for these works. You may need further consents for a loft conversion, particularly if you live in a conservation area or if your house is listed. Permission will be required where you extend or alter the roof space and it exceeds specified limits and conditions. Otherwise a loft conversion for your house is considered to be "permitted development", not requiring an application for planning permission, subject to certain limits and conditions. You must, however, comply with building regulations, which are separate from planning permission and these relate to "health and safety" type issues.

#### What are building regulations?

Building regulations maintain reasonable standards of health and safety for people in and around buildings. The main things to take into account in loft conversions are:

- structural stability
- fire escapes
- resistance of materials to fire
- resistance of materials to damp
- ventilation
- stairways
- insulation

You will need to obtain building regulation approval prior to the commencement of the works. Some builders may tell you that such approval is not necessary. If in doubt, do speak to Building Control at the council yourself. Once the works are finished, you must remember to ask the council to come back to re-inspect the conversion works so that they can issue a completion certificate. You may need to seek permission from your neighbours before the work goes ahead under the Party Walls Regulations.

#### We are concerned about fire safety; are there special rules?

When converting an existing roof space into a room or rooms the provisions for escape need to be considered throughout the full extent of the escape route. This often means that additional fire protection will be necessary in the existing parts of the house. For example, a typical loft conversion to a two-storey house will result in the need to provide new fire-resisting doors and sometimes partitions to protect the stairway. This is because it is too dangerous to escape via windows from floors above first floor level. Mains powered, interlinked smoke alarms will also need to be provided within the stairway at each level. It may also be necessary to upgrade the fire protection to some parts of the structure of the house, such as the floors.

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new floors are in place.

Outside, situated in the lower garden is a beautiful little boulangerie with its bread oven. This looks out on to the rolling fields down to the River Sienne, a Class 1 trout stream and the Leggetts hold the fishing rights for this.

"When we arrived we sought the advice of an architect and project manager. His advice was that to complete the project as we required, the material bill alone would exceed 1.2m euros and he could only guess at the labour costs.

"Sadly everyone underestimates what it costs to restore a chateau here in France!"

**The priory, La Bloutiere is for sale for offers in excess of 965,000 euros and if you are interested contact William H Brown Select on 01603 760044.**



### The history of the chateau:

Situated in Normandy, the current house which stands on a site which dates to Viking times, has its roots in the religious history of both England and France. It was once dedicated as a small chapel to the memory of Thomas Becket, pictured right, by two knights who were paying penance following his martyrdom - they worshipped for six years as they began its construction. The site was then gifted as an abbey in 1189 and later confirmed as an Augustine priory in 1199. The house and its chapel were revered for its beautiful tomb and the house became a centre of healing.

Over the years the Knights of Saint Thomas continued their works and their crusades. The Priory, as it later became known, was still a central focus for the knights sworn to the 'Cult of Thomas Becket'.

During the restoration the couple made some amazing finds including a statue of Saint Thomas à Beckett, and what is rumoured to be a very early medieval monument depicting the great Richard Longsword.

