

Internal and external housing alterations

This information sheet explains what internal and external alterations can be done as complying development to dwelling houses, other types of residential accommodation and ancillary development.

Important note

This information sheet is for guidance only and may not contain all the information relevant to every property in NSW. Applicants should refer to the [relevant planning controls](#)¹ before beginning work, or seek professional advice on how the planning controls apply to their property.

The majority of the development that can be done as exempt or complying development in NSW is identified in the State wide exempt and complying development policy (the policy). View the policy at the [Exempt and Complying Development Policy website](#)².

Complying development is a joint planning and construction approval that can be granted by council or a private certifier. [Information sheet 1.2](#)³ provides more information about complying development.

Note: As identified in Information Sheet 1.2 complying development cannot be carried out on certain land.

Things to know upfront

Building alterations cannot be done as complying development to any State (or interim item) or local heritage item.

Development on lots that are located on bushfire prone land, must meet additional fire safety standards. For more information see [Information Sheet 1.3](#)⁴ and clause 4.6A of the policy.

‘Ancillary development’ is development used in association with a dwelling such as an outbuilding or detached studio.

Internal alterations to dwellings (cl 4.1)

A ‘dwelling’ is any type of residential accommodation such as a dwelling house, an apartment, a duplex or a townhouse.

Some internal alterations to existing dwellings and ancillary development can be done as complying development. This includes new openings and doors and changes to the internal floor layout.

To be complying development internal alterations must not result in any of the following:

- a change in the building classification under the Building Code of Australia (BCA),
- an additional separate dwelling,
- the creation of an additional floor within a dwelling, and
- the erection or conversion of a basement for residential uses.

¹ <https://maps.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/Terms>

² www.planning.nsw.gov.au/exemptandcomplying

³ www.planning.nsw.gov.au/exemptandcomplyingoverview

⁴

www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Portals/0/BuildingInNSW/EC/EC_PO LICY_1_3_LAND_BASED_EXCLUSIONS.pdf

External alterations to dwelling houses (cl4.3 & 4.4)

A 'dwelling house' is a detached house. It does not include a semi-detached dwelling, townhouses or apartments.

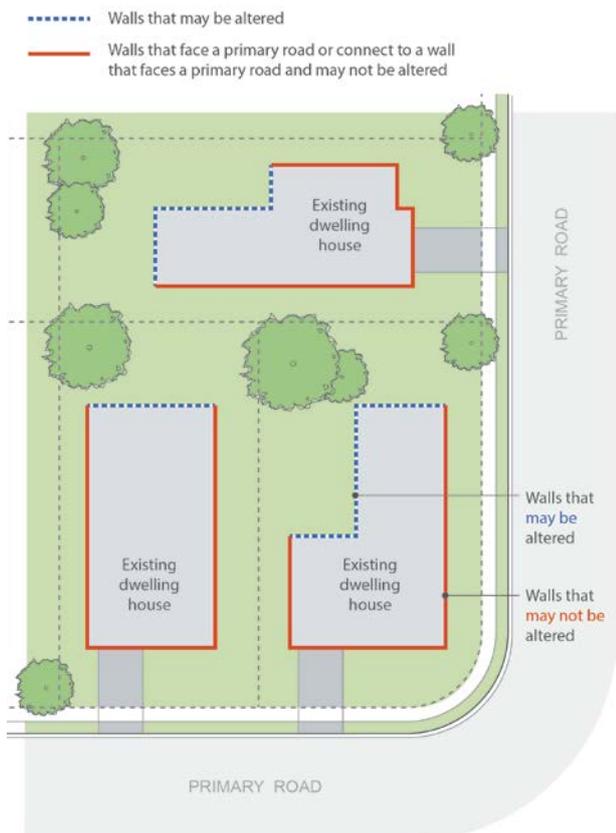
Some external alterations can be done as complying development to existing dwelling houses and their associated ancillary development.

If the dwelling house is in a heritage conservation area (or a draft heritage conservation area) external alterations can only be done to:

- the ground floor level of the dwelling house,
- a wall that faces the primary road, and
- a wall directly attached to the wall facing the primary road.

The walls of a dwelling house in a heritage conservation area that cannot be altered are shown in red in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: External alterations in heritage conservation areas (and draft conservation areas)



Any external alterations to existing dwelling houses must also comply with the following development standards:

- The development must not result in a change in the building classification under the BCA,
- The development must not increase the floor area of the dwelling house,
- The development must not alter the footprint of the dwelling house, and
- New windows must comply with the privacy requirements outlined in [Information Sheet 3.6](#), unless the new window is to a bedroom and is smaller than 2m².

External alterations to residential accommodation other than dwelling houses (cl. 4.4A & 4.4B)

External alterations to residential accommodation, other than dwelling houses, and its ancillary development, can also be done as complying development.

However, external alterations to dwellings (not including dwelling houses) cannot be done in the following circumstances:

- If the land is in a heritage conservation area (or draft area), or
- On a flood control lot.

To be complying development, the works must comply with the following development standards:

- The works cannot involve the construction of a new balcony, deck, patio, terrace or verandah,
- All works must be at least 3m from any side boundary (unless the works are an access ramp or safety device such as a handrail),
- All works must be located behind the building line facing the primary and any secondary road (unless the works are an access ramp or safety device such as a handrail),

(The 'building line' is the external wall of the dwelling.)

- The development must not increase the floor area of the dwelling or ancillary development,

- Works cannot occur higher than the third floor level of the building (not including basements or car parking levels) unless for the installation of or alteration of existing services and utilities,
- In any case, works cannot be higher than the maximum height limit for the site in council's Local Environmental Plan,
- The development must not result in a change in the building classification under the BCA,

Works must not affect existing building exits or any fire resisting components of the building, and

Materials and finishes must be of a similar colour and substance to the existing building.

Attic conversions (cl. 4.5 & 4.6)

The conversion of attic space in an existing dwelling house into a room can be done as complying development.

All attic rooms must be contained within the existing roof space and the pitch of the existing roof cannot be changed.

If the dwelling house is in a heritage conservation area or a draft conservation area, works must comply with the following specific development standards:

- No new dormer windows or roof extensions are allowed,
- Only windows that are flush with the existing rear roof plane are allowed, and
- The total area of all roof windows must not exceed 1.5m².
- If the dwelling house is not in a heritage conservation area (or draft area) the following development standards apply.
- If the dwelling house is less than 6m wide, one dormer window must be provided,
- If the dwelling is more than 6m wide, two dormer windows must be provided, and
- The flashing and waterproofing of the dormer window must not span the roof ridge.

Where dormer windows must be provided, they must comply with the following design specifications:

- They can be located in the front or rear roof plane,
- They cannot be wider than 1.3m,
- They must be at least 200mm below the roof ridge height of the dwelling house,
- They must be at least 500mm from the roof edge, and
- All dormer windows located in the rear roof plane cannot have a total area of more than 4m².

What other requirements do I need to consider?

If you propose to do any cut or fill the works must comply with the requirements for cut and fill for complying development. [Information Sheet 2.5](#)⁵ provides more information about cut and fill.

- If you propose to remove or prune any existing trees or vegetation, you should contact your council first to make sure you don't need approval for this.
- Any structures that would be located on public land or on or over a public road (including temporary structures) require separate approval from the relevant council or Roads and Maritime Services under the *Roads Act 1993* and the *Local Government Act 1993*.

If your proposal does not meet the required standards for complying development, you may still be able to do the work, but you must get development approval first. In this case, you should contact your local council to discuss your options.

⁵ www.planning.nsw.gov.au/en-us/buildinginnsw/exemptandcomplyingdevelopment/exemptdevelopment.aspx

Further Information

For more information visit the [Exempt and Complying Development Policy website](#)⁶ or contact the Department's Exempt and Complying Development Team on 1300 305 695 or by [email](#)⁷.

Electronic Housing Code

The Electronic Housing Code website helps applicants determine whether the proposed development qualifies as exempt or complying development and the standards that must be met.

Applications for complying development can also be lodged and tracked online for those council areas which are using the Electronic Housing Code. Visit the [Electronic Housing Code website](#)⁸ to find out if it is used by your local council or for more details.

⁶ www.planning.nsw.gov.au/exemptandcomplying

⁷ codes@planning.nsw.gov.au

⁸ www.electronichousingcode.com.au/