

4 - Getting a plan (design) on grant schemes

If you'd like to apply for a grant scheme for energy improvements you will nearly always have a survey of your home before works can start.

After deciding what works are going ahead, these need planning (designing) in more detail.

Depending on the type and number of energy improvements this might be done by:

- The builder or heating engineer.
- A specialist, like an architect or retrofit designer.

If you're having big insulation works (like external wall insulation) this stage is really important!

It's important to stress that standards and accreditations are no guarantee that you'll get good quality.

This is why we encourage you to learn more about the different stages you'll pass through on your way to a cosier, more affordable home.

A good first step is feeling more confident about what to look for, and what to ask.

Applying for grants?

See our other sheets on:

- 1 - An introduction to home improvement grants
- 2 - An introduction to Retrofit Standards
- 3 - Surveys and assessments
- 5 - Before work starts
- 6 - When work is finished
- 7 - Mixing grant schemes with other funding

Getting into the detail (design)

Questions to ask

☐

Will I be able to speak to someone about the detailed plans for works on my home?

☐

Can I see the plans or documents?

☐

What qualifications do the designers have?

This can get complicated!

- *For some single, simple improvements, it's enough to be trained and approved by a manufacturer, or be a qualified Retrofit Coordinator.*
- *For other things (especially multiple insulation or airtightness improvements) they may need to be a registered architect, surveyor or other specialist. This is also usually required if your home is older (e.g. built before 1919) or has a special construction type.*

☐

What materials or products are you suggesting? Why have you chosen these?

Some will suggest materials that purely focus on energy savings. This might limit choice and what's most appropriate for your home.

☐

If I'm getting new heating or ventilation controls, where will you put them?
Will I be able to reach and use them easily?

Check they've considered any special needs you have, or others you live with. E.g. are some buttons difficult, do you need a large, clear display?

☐ **Will the work need Planning Permission? Or any other consents?**

Planning permission is more likely for things visible from the street, like external wall insulation. It may also be needed because you live in a Conservation Area. Whether you need Planning Permission or not depends on your local council. Listed Buildings require special consent too.

☐ **Will the work need Building Control Approval?**

How, and who, will manage this process?

For some energy improvements you need to show you meet Building Regulations. Some companies are able to 'self certify' this work (like some Gas Safe engineers or electricians). Others might require a visit from a Building Control Officer.

☐ **Are any special details required to make this work for my home?**

Some things need extra attention to make sure they will work well. For example, maybe you have:

- *a porch*
- *a step or ramp to access your door*
- *a 'lean to' or extension at the back*
- *a conservatory*
- *bay windows*
- *nice architectural details that you want to keep*
- *a ginnel or alley between you and a neighbour.*

☐ **Will the works need Party Wall or agreements with my neighbours? Will you take care of these?**

☐ **Does it need an application to the electricity network operator (e.g. Electricity North West)?**

Some electrical works, like fitting a heat pump or solar panels, need an application to the network operator. This is so they can check the local wires and cables can cope with the extra power.