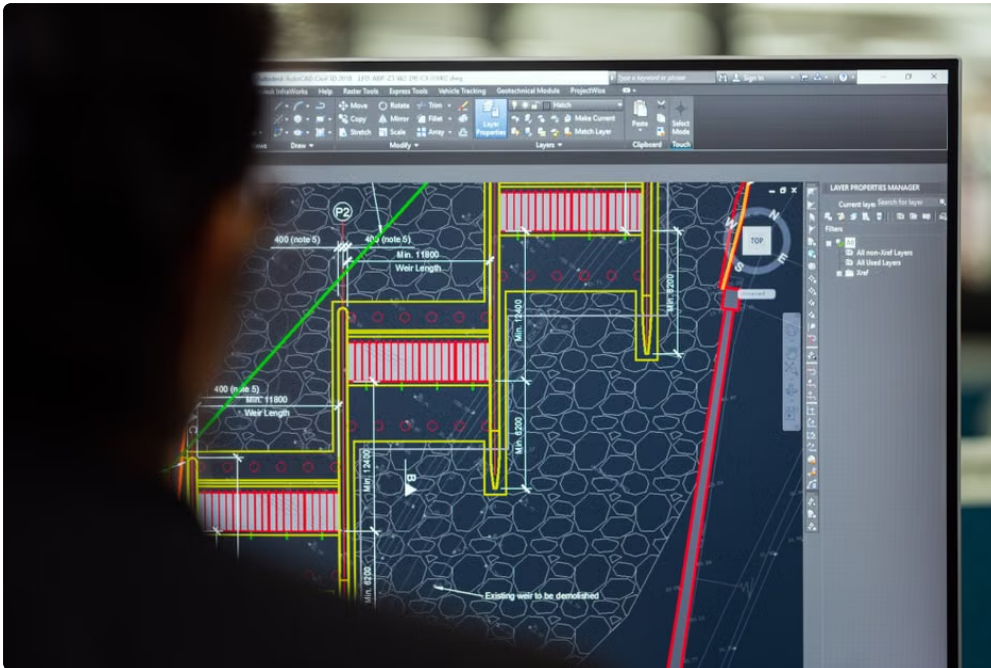


In this post, I'll break down what prior approval means for extensions, how far you can extend under these rules, the cost implications in 2026, and important considerations for those living in conservation areas or places with tricky access—like many interwar and postwar semis common in this region.



1. What Is the Larger Home Extension Prior Approval Route?
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This reminds me of something that happened made a mistake that cost them thousands.. The larger home extension prior approval is a planning process that falls under the scope of permitted development rights. Instead of going through a full planning application, you notify your local planning authority—in our area, Rugby Borough Council—and they have a set window (usually 42 days) to approve or reject based on specific criteria, particularly around neighbour impact.

This route specifically applies to extensions over a certain depth, allowing for rear extensions beyond the limits normally permitted without prior approval. It's also sometimes called *permitted development prior approval*.

**Why use prior approval?** The biggest advantage is speed and reduced costs. It avoids the complexity of a full planning application but still gives an element of control to prevent party wall or neighbour disputes.

*Note:* Always confirm whether your quote includes VAT before agreeing to anything—builders sometimes quote pre-VAT to make the price look artificially low, especially on larger jobs.

## Common confusions I've seen

- Lump-sum quotes that don't break down groundwork, structure, and finishing stages can hide expensive surprises.
- Builders pricing based on verbal briefs rather than detailed surveys often leads to early contingency spending—and early stress.

## How Far Can You Extend Behind Your Home?

The **standard permitted development**

- Up to 3 metres rearward extension for terraced or semi-detached houses.
- Up to 4 metres for detached houses.

However, under the *larger home extension prior approval route*, you can **double this depth** to:

- **6 metres for terraced/semi-detached** (double 3m)
- **8 metres for detached** (double 4m)

This gives much more scope for spacious new kitchens, family rooms, or even a large open-plan dining area.

**Important:** The prior approval process requires notifying your neighbours (via a site notice or direct letter) to flag concerns about loss of light, privacy, or overshadowing.

## Also remember the height limits:

- Single-storey extensions must not exceed 4 metres in total height.
- If the extension is within 2 metres of the boundary, the eaves height cannot be more than 3 metres.

## Single-Storey vs Two-Storey Extensions: Tradeoffs

The prior approval route typically applies to **single-storey rear extensions**. Two-storey extensions demand full planning permission, a longer and more detailed process.

### Single-storey advantages:

- Generally cheaper, quicker to build.
- Less likely to be refused under permitted development rules.
- Can be substantial with the doubled depth allowance (up to 8m).

### Two-storey extension advantages:

- Add both floor space and bedroom count.
- Potentially higher resale value.

### Tradeoffs to consider:

- Two-storey builds require full planning application—there's no shortcut via prior approval.
- Potentially more disruption during construction.
- In conservation areas or with limited side access (common in Rugby's interwar semis), logistics can increase costs.

## Extension Cost Estimates and Pricing Per Square Metre in 2026

Extension costs fluctuate due to labour rates, material prices, and site-specific factors.

Based on current market data and my experience there, here's a rough price range for extensions in 2026:

| Extension Type               | Average Cost (Including VAT) | Cost per Square Metre | Notes                                                 |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Single-storey rear extension | £25,000 - £40,000            | £1,800 - £2,500       | Depends on finish level, foundations, and groundworks |
| Two-storey rear extension    | £50,000 - £80,000            | £2,000 - £3,000       | Includes structural work and planning fees            |

*Keep a mental checklist for groundworks surprises:* Unexpected drainage issues, shrink-swell soils, or poor ground conditions can add thousands. Always check if the quote includes contingency for these.

## Midlands Labour Cost Advantage vs London

A major cost advantage of working in Rugby or the Midlands is the typically lower labour costs compared to London and the South East.

Labour rates in the Midlands can be 15%-30% less, meaning you get more construction value for your budget. However, material costs tend to be [lawful development certificate](#) similar nationwide, so good design to minimize waste is key.

**Pro tip:** When comparing quotes, ask each builder explicitly if prices include VAT and how they handle site access issues—narrow driveways common in postwar semis can affect costs substantially.

## Planning Permission and Permitted Development

Understanding the difference between **planning permission** and **permitted development** (PD) rights is crucial to avoid costly misunderstandings.



- **Planning Permission:** Formal application required, assessed on many grounds, including design, neighbours, and conservation impact.
- **Permitted Development (PD):** Set limits on extensions without needing full permission, but still subject to conditions and prior approval for larger scales.

The prior approval route is a bridge between these: it allows larger single-storey rear extensions beyond standard PD limits but requires extra neighbour consultation and a shorter decision period.

## Conservation Areas and Special Considerations

If your home is in one of Rugby's or another Midlands town's conservation areas, or is a listed building, the rules tighten significantly.

- Permitted development rights may be withdrawn or limited.
- Prior approval may not be an option.
- Full planning permission, with more stringent design guidelines, is almost certainly required.

Always check with your local authority's conservation officer early to avoid surprises.

## The Lawful Development Certificate Process in Rugby

If you've completed an extension or want to confirm that your planned works are lawful under PD or prior approval rules, applying for a **Lawful Development Certificate** (LDC) with Rugby Borough Council can be invaluable.

An LDC provides legal confirmation that your extension does not require retrospective planning permission, which removes risk when selling your home later.

## Useful Tools for Homeowners

- HomeOwners Alliance Cost of Moving Calculator — Handy for weighing whether moving might be cheaper than extending.

- Local authority websites, like Rugby Borough Council Lawful Development Certificate info — Essential reading for procedural steps.

## Summary and Final Thoughts

The **larger home extension prior approval route** is a powerful option for homeowners wanting to extend much further than the usual 3 or 4 metres without the burdens of a full planning application. By doubling your depth allowance, you get more living space, faster—and often cheaper.

Ask yourself this: keep in mind:

- It applies only to single-storey rear extensions.
- You need to notify neighbours and await their feedback.
- In conservation areas or with heritage listings, these rights are often removed.
- Costs in Rugby and the Midlands remain generally lower than London but always confirm exactly what's included in quotes, including VAT and groundworks.

Lastly, consider whether expansion or moving makes more financial sense: the the HomeOwners Alliance cost of moving calculator is a great starting point.

Planning your extension carefully helps avoid the pitfalls I've seen too often: early spending of contingency, lump-sum quotes with hidden extras, and builder surprises on site. Use the prior approval route wisely to get the best of both worlds: bigger space and relative simplicity.

If you found this guide useful, keep an eye on local Rugby and Midlands forums or planning offices for updates—planning rules do evolve!