

Converting a Patio/ Carport/ Garage Into a Habitable Room

What is a habitable room?

A habitable room is defined by the Building Code of Australia (BCA) as a room used for normal domestic activities such as a bedroom, living room, lounge room, music room, television room, kitchen, dining room sewing room, study, playroom, family room and sun room.

It excludes a bathroom, laundry, water closet, pantry, walk-in wardrobe, corridor, hallway, lobby, photographic darkroom, clothes-drying room, and other spaces of a specialised nature occupied neither frequently nor for extended periods. These are considered non-habitable rooms.

Is a permit required to convert a non-habitable room into a habitable room?

All room conversions require a Building Permit issued by the City of Mandurah prior to any works commencing on site. Most existing sheds, patios and carports do not achieve many of the requirements of a habitable room. It is common that major modifications are necessary to achieve the requirements of the BCA for a room to be used for habitable purposes.

How do I get a building permit?

To obtain a Building Permit, applicants must either submit to Council's Building Services Section an "Application for Building Permit – Uncertified" or an "Application for Building Permit – Certified". Certified applications are where you engage a private building surveyor who will provide you with a Certificate of Design Compliance where as an Uncertified application will be assessed by the City's Building Surveyor who will include a Certificate of Design Compliance with the Building Permit. Please refer to the "How Do I Get a Building Permit" information brochure for further information on the different types of applications.

Applications are preferred to be submitted electronically. On the City of Mandurah website click the "I want to" button, then the "Building Lodgements" link. Alternatively, a hard copy application may be submitted for those without access to electronic documents.

What documents need to be submitted with my Building Application?

Applicants for building permits must submit one set of plans either electronically or in paper and will generally include:

- A site plan at a minimum scale of 1:200 showing the distance the proposed structure will be setback from the lot boundaries and all other buildings on the property (including pools and retaining walls).
- A contour survey plan clearly showing existing ground levels on the property, verge/street levels, and proposed finished floor, driveway, paving and ground levels.
- Footing and slab details. Note: a waterproof barrier is to be installed under the concrete floor.

- A floor plan, section and elevations at a minimum scale of 1:100 showing all dimensions. Include clearly dimensions of walls, rooms, windows & doors, and existing adjoining rooms.
- Construction details showing materials to be used and their respective sizes, spans and spacing.
- Location of all smoke detectors as required by the Building Code of Australia
- Details showing the dwelling's compliance with the energy efficiency provisions of the BCA. (eg: energy rating certification from an Energy Efficiency Assessor).
- If submitting a “certified” application, a copy of the Certificate of Design Compliance issued by your Building Surveying Contractor including all reference documents.

Note: other specific information may be required following assessment of your plans by the Building Surveyor.

Some notes about room conversions:

There are a number of significant issues that you need to consider if you wish to change the use of a non-habitable room to a habitable room including (but not limited to) the following:

- A carport/ garage may be converted to a habitable room if there is sufficient space elsewhere on the lot to provide adequate parking space.
- The level of the new floor may be required to match the level of the existing floor level of the residence.
- A complying termite barrier is to be installed under the concrete floor and around the perimeter.
- Moisture must be prevented from entering the room. This includes rising damp between the ground and the floor slab, and preventing moisture through walls and a roof. Cavity wall construction is generally required and can be double brick, brick veneer, timber or steel stud wall lined externally and internally.
- A complying ceiling is to be installed under the roof cover with a minimum ceiling height of 2.4 metres above the finished floor to be achieved.
- Toilet, laundry and bathroom windows that open into the new room are to be sealed and mechanical ventilation systems (exhaust fans) installed.
- Compliance with the energy efficiency provisions of the BCA will be required. Details demonstrating compliance will be required. It is recommended that you consult with your draftsperson or an Energy Assessor regarding this.

What fees need to be paid?

Refer to scheduled fee information for the amount to be paid on submission.



What are the general planning requirements?

The setbacks of houses from property boundaries are determined by:

- City's Town Planning Scheme,
- Residential Design Codes (R-Codes) of Western Australia
- Local Planning Policies
- Detailed Area Plans

You can confirm the zoning of your property on the City's Online Mapping facility, located under the "Find It" tab on the City's website.

Where an application is submitted that proposes any variation to the City's Town Planning Scheme, the Residential Design Codes or Local Planning Policy, an application for Development Approval will also be required to be submitted and approval obtained before the building application is able to be determined. Submission of these applications does not guarantee that your application will be approved. Different and additional fees apply to these development applications.

For further information, please contact Building Services on 9550 3777

