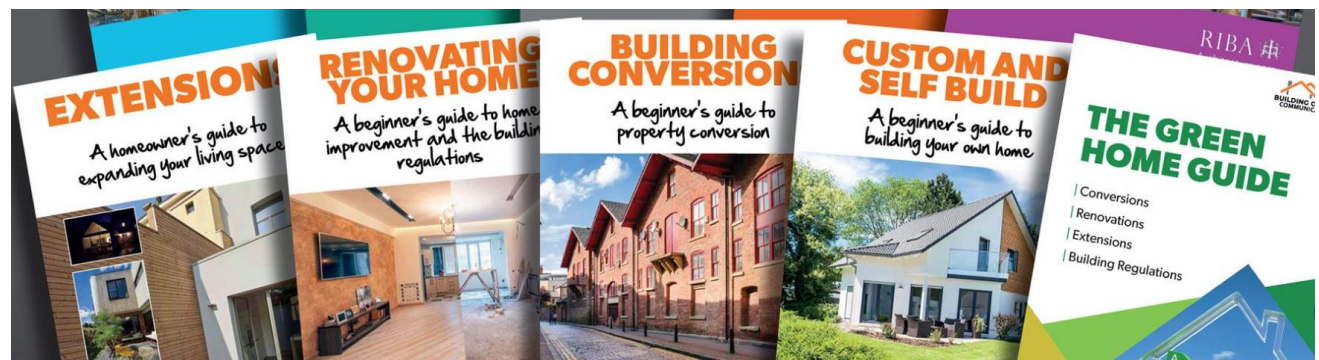


HOW TO MAXIMISE USE OF YOUR HOMEOWNER EBOOK GUIDES

SPRING 2024



INTRODUCTION

Building Control Communications produces the free Homeowner Guides on your behalf to raise awareness of your building control service and help you compete against Approved Inspectors. We use social media and other marketing strategies to promote the Guides thereby driving potential user traffic directly to you whilst also helping customers to self-serve.

The main ways in which the Guides do this is:

- Once a Guide is published, we run targeted social media campaigns through Facebook and Instagram aimed at your potential customers
- We provide a comprehensive package of extra free help and support, such as a series of project blogs related to Guide topics to add to your website, regular Guide viewing stats so that you can see how well your Guides are performing and other marketing support such as suggestions to improve website content for the unfamiliar homeowner user (on request)
- Each of your Guides is automatically added to your dedicated '[search for your LABC team](#)' page on the Planning Portal. In 2022 and 2023 these pages received a total of 100,000 views each year.
- In total, Building Control Communications spends £200,000/year advertising the Guides through social media and paying back royalties to Guide users. This in turn promotes every Guide user's service, generating more enquiries through to their teams. In 2022 views of all the E-book Guides totalled over 2 million
- We offer the option to choose an additional tailored social media campaign instead of taking the 10% royalty paid on publication of each Homeowner Guide. (Contact us for more information.)

To enhance what we already do for you as part of the free Homeowner Guide marketing package please look at the following suggestions to make your Guides work even harder for you. By adding the Guides to your website, you are helping to make your service more 'searchable' as their content contains key words which users will include in their search such as extension, building regulations, etc.

HOW TO MAXIMISE USE OF YOUR HOMEOWNER GUIDES

ADD THE GUIDE(S) TO THE BUILDING CONTROL AREA OF YOUR COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

Adding the Guide to your website not only helps your service become more 'searchable' on the world wide web and look more customer friendly, but when potential customers arrive at your website they can then self-serve more efficiently.

Once your Guide is complete, we will email you both a link and a pdf (a format of the Guide which will be simple for your Comms/IT team to upload onto your website.) Please ensure this is done as soon as possible as advertisers take space in the Guides with the expectation of the Guide being live on your site for a minimum of 12 months.

There are numerous ways in which to add the Guides, whether as a simple link using the pdf image sat under your 'Building Control information/before you start work' area or your webpages or you could create a **'Homeowner Information'** section within your webpages so that all the most relevant information for homeowners is easy for them to find in one place.

Here you could add links to your Homeowner Guides (and future project blogs which will be sent to Guide users regularly) and could also include other useful information relevant to homeowners:

- Link to your Homeowner Guide(s)
- Project blogs – please ask us for more information. (These are freely available and cover topics such as: Before you start your extension, how building control provides peace of mind, do I need building regs approval for my project? garage conversions, taking down an internal wall etc.)
- [What types of application need building regulations](#)
- [Common exempt projects](#)
- FAQs (see [Southern BCP](#) website for ideas)
- Link to how to make a Building Regulations application (inc fees)
- Link to how to book a site inspection
- Useful website links (such as [Competent Persons Register](#), [Environment Agency](#), [Faculty of Party Wall Surveyors](#), [H&S Executive](#), [LABC](#), [The Planning Portal](#) [interactive house](#), [structural engineers](#).)
- How to request a completion certificate

If you have a 'News/Update' section add the Guide to this too, stating the publication has recently been produced to help local homeowners through the often unfamiliar process of applying for building regulations. Give a little detail about content ie it covers the most common projects from taking down a load bearing wall to building a kitchen extension and explains about the building control process. Also include information on how to contact your team.

ADD YOUR GUIDES TO YOUR TEAMS' EMAIL FOOTER

Include a line of text under each of your team's email sign offs together with the pdf image of each Guide (and a link to the project blogs on your website). This is usually straightforward to do once you have approval from your council's comms team.

'Planning a home improvement project? Read our homeowner Guide(s) and project blogs before you start work'

USE THE HOMEOWNER PROJECT BLOGS

We have written a series of 16 project blogs which allow you to share information about what you do and what work needs building regulations approval in a more friendly and informal way, educating potential customers whilst creating a connection with you. They can be used in two ways; the most effective would be to create a 'Project Blog' section within your building control webpages, alternatively, you could forward them to your council Comms team to send them out via their social media channels.

We have written a document called 'How to use homeowner project blogs' and can help you make the most of these. Please ask us for a copy.

Adding the blogs to your website pages

The blogs contain key words relating to common building projects that potential users will be using when searching on the web - such as drainage; Part P, heating; doors and windows; ventilation; roofs; stairs. The blog content will therefore drive more potential user traffic to your website through use of the key word searches. Blogs will continue to draw interest long after they have been published. (You can verify this by subscribing to free analytics tools such as Google Analytics which enable you to collect data and show how many views specific blog posts have had.)

Once you have several blogs, don't forget to mention them in your council resident e-newsletter too. You may even want to write your own blogs, showcasing a specific project or discussing a regulations update affecting homeowners.

Using the blogs as social media posts

A simple way to use the blogs is to ask your council Comms team to post a link to your blogs via your Council's social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter,

Instagram etc. If you provide them with 6-7 blogs at once they will be able to schedule these in to be posted out, say one a week, via Hootsuite or whichever social media management tool they use.

BUILD AWARENESS OF THE GUIDES WITH YOUR OWN TEAM

Make sure you tell your own team as soon as the Guides go live. Take a few minutes to show everyone where they can be found on your website and the [Planning Portal page](#) and explain about the type of information they contain. By referencing the Guides when talking to potential customers your team can save time and back up their conversations. It improves the level of service offered and increases customer engagement. Because Guides are broken down into chapters it is easy to refer someone to a specific section for example, loft conversions or taking down a wall.

BUILD AWARENESS OF THE GUIDES WITH OTHER INTERNAL TEAMS

Make sure the customer service and planning teams are aware of your Guides. Talk to heads of departments and ask them to send an email on your behalf to all team members. Give a brief explanation of the purpose of the Guide and make sure you provide a point of contact within your team if they have queries.

Both these teams will often get questions about building control which they are not able to respond to, but they can be proactive and suggest they look at a Guide for help before contacting building control.

LET YOUR COUNCILLORS KNOW WHEN GUIDES GO LIVE

Raise your profile with Councillors. Your council will usually send out regular news bulletins to Councillors and especially after a local election. Ask to be included in the next one and send an explanation about how the Guide can help residents and where to find it on your website as well as giving a point of contact within your team.

Councillors may find the Guides useful themselves, but they will mostly be a point of reference when they are trying to help residents.

QUOTES/ENQUIRIES EMAIL TEMPLATES

The Guides are most helpful to homeowners at the stage when they are planning their project. Add a clear hyperlink to the Guide(s) when sending your email quotes/responses to enquiries. (This applies to homeowners and builders/plan drawers as the latter may forward your quote onto the homeowner.)

SEND OUT INTRODUCTION LETTERS TO HOMEOWNERS WHO HAVE MADE A PLANNING APPLICATION

If you send out introduction letters to homeowners who have recently submitted planning applications and who would then need building regulations approval, include information about your homeowner Guide(s) and where to find them on your website. (The contact information for homeowners can be found in the Planning teams' weekly planning lists.)

PROMOTE THE GUIDES IN YOUR COUNCIL RECEPTION AREA

If you have a large TV screen in reception with a rotating carousel of information for visitors, ask to add some information about your service for homeowners and reference the Homeowner Guides. (A PowerPoint slide is usually sufficient for use on the screen.) Explain the purpose is to offer proactive advice to homeowners/potential customers.

If your council doesn't have a screen, consider buying an inexpensive pop-up banner to stand in the reception area. It can promote your service and explain what information can be found on your area of the website. (Pop up banners can be bought for c. £100 and can be reused at other events, such as homeowner surgeries.)

ADD A SHORT ARTICLE TO YOUR COUNCIL'S RESIDENT E/NEWSLETTER

Write a short article for your Comms team about your new Guide(s) for homeowners who are embarking on any home improvement projects. Mention a few areas the Guide covers and where it can be found on your website. Add details of how to contact the building control team if the Guide raises any further questions. (Include an image of the Guide or a local project if possible.)

By being proactive and raising awareness of your service, residents are more likely to consider using you when they do need building control. They will also be aware that there is a council service if their agent suggests using an AI. (Building Control Communications can help with an image for inclusion with the article, please ask us if you need help.)

Example article

Planning home improvements - know the rules before you start

Most projects will require planning and/or building regulations approval before work starts. Our building control team has recently produced two online guides for homeowners to help them understand the rules that apply when carrying out home improvements.

The guides explain everything you need to know before starting a project. Chapters cover the different planning and building regulations processes, how to choose a builder and information on the rules around creating more space in your home. If you are thinking about a loft conversion or a kitchen extension or need to know what is involved with re-roofing work or replacing windows and doors at your property, take a look at the guides below.

- A Guide to Extending your Home
- A Guide to Renovating your Home

If you would like to discuss your project with the building control team before you submit an application they can be contacted at xxxx

CREATE TWEETS/POSTS ABOUT GUIDE CONTENT VIA YOUR COUNCIL'S ACCOUNTS

Your council will already have several thousand followers, so this is a very simple way to drive more traffic to your area of the website and raise awareness of your service with local residents. Posts or Tweets do not need to be complicated, in fact should be simple, and can usually be sent over in batches on a spreadsheet (say every quarter) to your Comms team who can then schedule them on Hootsuite or a similar social media management tool. Choose chapters from the Guide(s) to create your Tweets and Posts and ensure you add an image/GIF if possible. (Try Pexels, Pixabay and Unsplash websites for royalty free images.)

Think about current trends or the time of year when writing ie early autumn would be a good time to mention replacing windows and doors and reroofing etc. You should Tweet/Post regularly, once a week if possible and don't be afraid to repeat information in a slightly different way if the subject is a popular one ie kitchen extensions or loft conversions. Tweets should be no longer than 280 characters and limit hashtags (#) to 1-2 per Tweet.

Suggestions for content - social media posts



07458 156158/07429 359550
www.zincmedia.com

Extensions Guide

NB. You can link to the specific page in your guide you are referring to in the posts below by adding ?page=(page number) to the end of the url for your guide ie <https://www.extendingyourhome.com/labc/gteyh/maidstone/maidstonegteyh2023/?page=24>

- *Need more living space without moving home? - our building control team has produced a guide on what to consider before starting any #home improvements **link to guide***
- *Reasons to use your local authority building control team to support you through your building project **link to guide***
- *Did you know you may not need planning permission but may need building regulations for your #extension – read our building control team’s guide for #homeowners **link to guide***
- *If you are planning #building works that affect a #party wall with your neighbour’s property read this information from building control before you start **link to guide***
- *Read building control’s step by step guide to the process for building a #home extension **link to guide***
- *Find out if you need #building regulations for your building project by reading building control’s advice here **link to guide***
- *What are the steps involved in a basement conversion? Read our building control team’s advice here **link to guide***
- *Planning a new #extension? Read our building control team’s new Guide for #homeowners before you start work **link to guide***
- *Read our building control team’s tips on finding a good #builder for your #home improvement project **link to guide***
- *A #loft conversion makes the most of unused space in your home but needs careful planning to avoid mistakes. Find out what you need to consider in our building control guide **link to guide***
- *#Basement and cellar conversions are increasing popular, especially where space is limited above ground. Building control has produced practical guidance for #homeowners before starting work **link to guide***
- *Thinking about #converting your garage as a low-cost way to increase your #living space? Read the chapter in our building control team’s guide **link to guide***
- *Read building control’s tips on making your home more #energy efficient from types of insulation to lighting and heating **link to guide***
- *Don’t get caught out - does the #Party Wall Act apply to your building work? Check by reading #building control’s guide here **link to guide***
- *Read building control’s tips on finding experts and good #builders before you start your #home improvement project **link to guide***
- *If you are thinking about home improvements read building control’s tips to incorporate #energy saving measures to your home at the same time **link to guide***

If you would like more examples posts for any of the other Guides please contact us and we will be happy to provide these for you.

A Facebook Post should include an engaging image and have a 'call to action' ie 'read our homeowner guide.' Ask your Comms team about the best time of day for the Posts to go out as they will monitor when there is most engagement from followers.

If you do go ahead with the above, your Comms team will be monitoring any comments received as a result of a Tweet or Post. Make sure you nominate more than one member of your team to be available to answer any questions raised. (Though this would happen very rarely.)

RAISE AWARENESS OF YOUR GREEN HOMES GUIDE WITH YOUR CLIMATE EMERGENCY OFFICER

If your council is one of the majority which has declared a Climate Emergency/has a Climate Action Plan, contact the Climate Emergency Officer to make them aware of your Guide and its purpose. A link can then be added to that area of your council website for the wider benefit of residents as well as your own area of the website for potential users of your service.

THANK 'KNOWN' ADVERTISERS PERSONALLY FOR TAKING SPACE IN YOUR GUIDE

Whilst the Guides clearly state that you **do not** recommend or endorse any information provided by third parties within the Homeowner Guide (see screenshot on following page), you may like to send an email to advertisers that are well known to you and are regular users of your service, thanking them for their support. List the ways the Guide will be used proactively to help homeowners/potential customers and how it will therefore promote their service as well as your own.

A quick way to send the email to say a dozen people, if you don't have time to send individual emails, is to exclude the 'Dear x' at the beginning of the email and send out one email to everyone with yourself as the main recipient and all the advertiser you want to send to in the 'BCC' option. (This way they won't see each other's email addresses.)



Draft Thank you email to 'known' advertisers

Dear

I am emailing to thank you for taking advertising space in our Guide to xx. Your support is very much appreciated as the Guide will be a great source of information and guidance for homeowners, providing details about planning, budgeting and implementing a building project. It will also save us time answering the most commonly asked questions.

Please be assured that we will make great use of the Guide which has now gone live and can be seen on our website here. (link)

Through the support of Building Control Communications who produced this for us, the Guide will also be available to view:

- Via social media campaigns Building Control Communications carry out on Facebook and Instagram
- On our [Local Authority page](#) of the Planning Portal when a potential customer searches for their LABC team
- On the footer of all our teams' outgoing emails
- By customers who contact us for further information about home improvements
- Via other promotional routes, such as our council newsletter/tweets/posts (*delete as appropriate*)

Best regards

Name and title

WHO TO CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to discuss any of the content of this Guide in more detail, please contact:

Sue Daly at sue.daly@buildingcontrolcomms.com