

Guidelines for converting a garage to a secondary dwelling

Under the *Building Code of Australia* (BCA) a garage is deemed as a Class 10(a) Building and is defined as a “non-habitable building”. Converting the garage into a secondary dwelling (granny flat) changes the use to a “habitable building” which becomes a Class 1(a) Building.

1. **BCA Report** - To determine if the existing building structure can meet the BCA requirements for a Class 1(a) Building, a suitably qualified person will need prepare a BCA Report. Examples of matters that will be listed in the BCA Report will be:
 - The ground floor slab of a habitable structure must be constructed in accordance with Australian Standard (AS) 2870, be at least 150mm above the adjacent ground level and the underside of the slab must be provided with a damp proof membrane.
 - The structure is to be provided with Termite Risk Management measures.
 - Floor to ceiling heights.
 - The walls of the building must have a minimum boundary setback of 900mm.
(Note: A current survey plan showing side and rear setbacks, natural ground levels and finished floor levels will be required)
 - The building must be provided with sufficient natural light and natural ventilation.

Whilst this is not an exhaustive list of the matters for consideration in ‘changing the use of a garage’ it is representative of the key matters to be considered in assessing the feasibility of the proposal and should an existing structure not meet any of these requirements, an upgrade of the existing structure would be required.

2. **Basix Certificate**. The Department of Planning requires all new Class 1(a) Buildings including the conversion of a non-habitable building to a habitable building (secondary dwelling) to comply with SEPP Basix (thermal comfort). If the garage structure is to remain, an ‘Accredited Assessor’ will need to be engaged. An ‘Accredited Assessor’ means a person accredited by an Assessor Accrediting Organisation (AAO) to conduct Simulations for the Thermal Comfort Index of BASIX.
3. **Private Open Space**. A separate private open space area of at least 24sqm is required for the secondary dwelling.
4. **Access**. Direct access from the street to the secondary dwelling will need to be provided.
5. **Car Parking**. At least 1 off-street car parking space for the main dwelling must be provided.
6. **Floor Space Ratio**. The total floor space for a secondary dwelling cannot exceed 60sqm. The total floor space ratio for the main and secondary dwelling cannot exceed 0.50:1. Floor space calculations will need to be listed.
7. **Development Application / Complying Development**. If the proposed conversion of a garage to a secondary dwelling cannot meet the Complying Development provisions, a Development Application will need to be submitted to Council.

Council’s Development Application Requirements Checklist lists the information that is required to be submitted with the Development Application. **Note:** The BCA Report (Point 2 above) and Basix Certificate (Point 3 above) will need to be submitted with the application.