Before you start

What to gather, what to measure and what the Estimator Engine will not price. Read this before you buy. Most of the answers are gathered in one walk round the outside of your house with a tape measure.

What it prices, and what it says nothing about

The Estimator Engine answers one question: what is your proposed extension likely to cost to build. It is a cost tool and nothing else.

It gives no advice on planning permission, a building warrant or building regulations. It does not know whether what you describe is permitted development or whether it would be granted consent. **You can get a price for an extension that would not be allowed to be built.** It prices what you describe. Whether you may build it is a separate question.

Use the report to test whether the project is affordable. If it is, you must take professional advice on planning and building regulations before you spend anything on design.

What it will not price

The Estimator Engine prices **house extensions to a single house in the United Kingdom**. It does not price:

- flats or maisonettes, commercial property, houses in multiple occupation, mixed use property, or splitting one property into two
- renovations, conversions (including converting a garage) or new houses
- work inside your existing house, other than where the proposed extension joins it
- basements
- property on the Isle of Man, Jersey or Guernsey, or anywhere outside the UK

It also does not include new kitchen units, worktops or appliances; plumbing for hot and cold water and waste pipes; the supply and fitting of baths, showers, shower trays, toilets, basins and taps; changes to the layout of your existing house; design and engineering fees; or the fees for any approvals your project needs. You cannot choose a bathroom, shower room, en-suite, WC or utility room in the proposed extension.

Answers that will stop it

> **These cannot be priced at all:**
>
> - **Ground that falls more than 1.75m** between the floor inside the existing house and the garden, at the line of the new outer wall.
> - **A proposed extension smaller than about 2m by 2m, or larger than 100 square metres** measured around the outside.
> - **A room wider than 10m inside**, measured across its narrower direction.
> - **A side extension with less than 1.5m** between the existing house and the boundary, or **extending the end of the house with less than 2.5m**. You can still price an extension across the back.

These stop it until you change an answer, and you can then carry on:

- a proposed extension with more storeys than the existing house
- a two-storey proposed extension on a house with ceilings lower than 2.4m
- a two-storey proposed extension built against a garage you are keeping
- a gap narrower than 900mm kept between the proposed extension and the boundary
- a dual pitch roof on an L-shaped proposed extension
- uPVC folding doors (aluminium folding doors and uPVC sliding doors are priced)
- a new window or door taller than its material allows (2.2m in uPVC, 3m in aluminium), or taller than the room it stands in
- more new windows and doors than the walls of the proposed extension can hold

Payment is taken before you start, and it buys one calculation for one address. If one of these limits applies to your project, the Estimator Engine will tell you which one, but **the fee is not refunded**. Everything that can stop it is listed on this page so that you can check before you buy. Once your report is issued you can change your answers once within seven days and ask for a revised estimate, at no extra cost.

At your desk

Nothing to measure. You must know:

- **the address and postcode** of the property, and whether it is on an island reached by ferry or plane. The address cannot be changed after your first price.
- **where the property sits**: remote rural, in or near a village, suburban, or urban town or city centre
- **roughly when the existing house was built**: before 1919, 1919 to 1945, 1945 to 1980, 1980 to 2000, or after 2000
- **what kind of house it is** (detached, semi-detached, end of terrace, mid terrace) and how many storeys it has
- **what its walls are built of**: solid stone, solid brick, cavity or timber frame
- **how high the ceilings are** in the existing house: standard, about 2.4m; low, about 2m; tall, about 3m; or very tall, about 3.5m

If you are not sure of the age or the walls, the property's Energy Performance Certificate shows both and is free to look up. **You do not need your deeds or a title plan.** Where we ask about a boundary, we mean wherever you take the boundary to be.

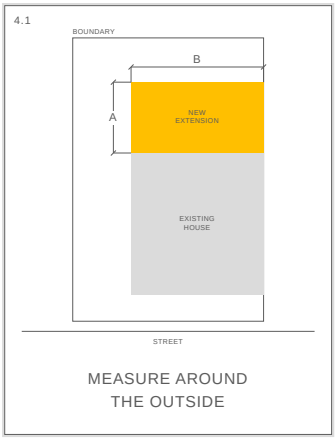
Take outside with you

- **A tape measure 8m or longer.** A 5m tape will not reach across the back of most houses. If yours is short, you must mark the halfway point and measure in two runs.
- On grass, a helper or a few tent pegs, so the tape does not wander.
- The worksheet on the last page of this guide, and a pen.

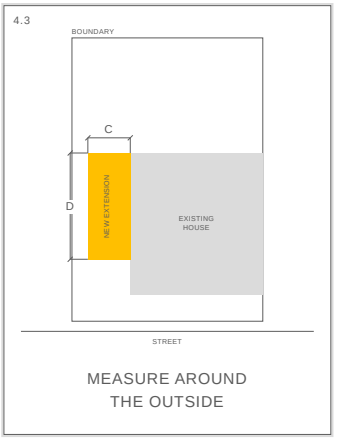
Measure

1. The size of the proposed extension, around the outside

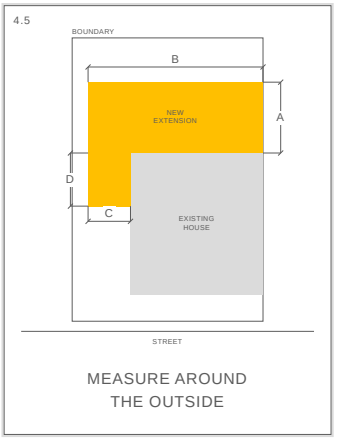
You must measure to the outside face of the new walls, in metres to one decimal place. The letters you need depend on where it goes.



Across the back: A, how far it comes out from the existing house; B, the length of its back wall.

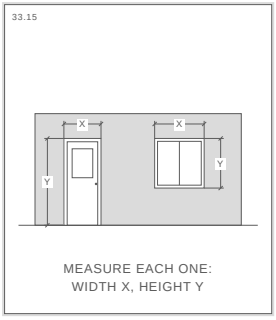


Down the side: C, how far it comes out from the side wall; D, how far it runs along the existing house.



Wrapping round, in an L: all four. B is the full length of the back leg.

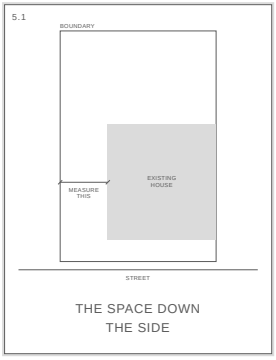
2. The windows and doors the proposed extension will cover



You must count every window and door on the existing house that the proposed extension will cover, including any inside a conservatory, and measure the width (X) and height (Y) of each one. On a two-storey proposed extension, count the upstairs windows as well.

If you already know how the proposed extension will open into the house, you must measure **the width of that opening** across its outside edges. Where a window and a door will be taken out together, measure the whole of the new opening.

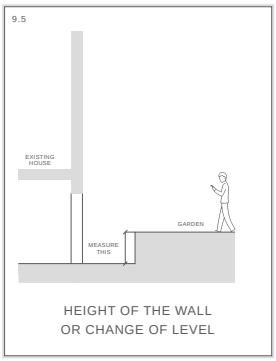
3. The space at the side



Only for an extension down the side, in an L or extending the end of the house. You must measure the space between the side wall of the existing house and the boundary. The Estimator Engine asks for it as a band: less than 1.5m, 1.5 to 2.5m, 2.5 to 3m, more than 3m, or not sure.

If you want to keep a path between the proposed extension and the boundary, it must be at least 900mm wide.

4. Levels in the garden



The ground at the new outer wall. Note whether the garden there is level with the floor inside the existing house, slopes down, or is flat at a lower level. If it is lower, estimate by how much, to the nearest 300mm: about 300mm, 600mm, 900mm, 1.2m or 1.5m.

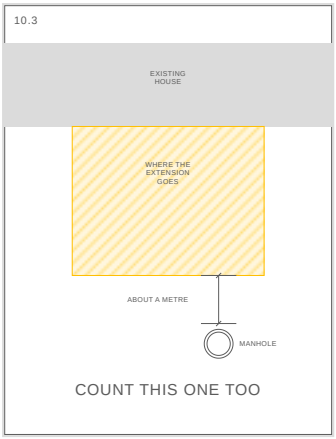
A garden wall, bank or step up within 3m of the back of the house. Note how far it is from the house, and you must measure its height from the ground at its foot to the ground at its top. This is the one height the Estimator Engine cannot work out for you.

5. Anything that has to come down

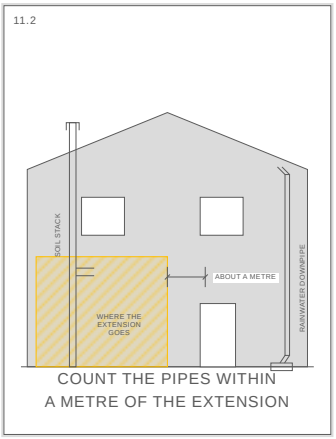
If a conservatory, attached garage or lean-to stands where the proposed extension will go, you must measure its width and length. Note whether a garage is sectional (panels) or built of brick or block, and the shape of its roof. Note

whether an oil tank there is still in use.

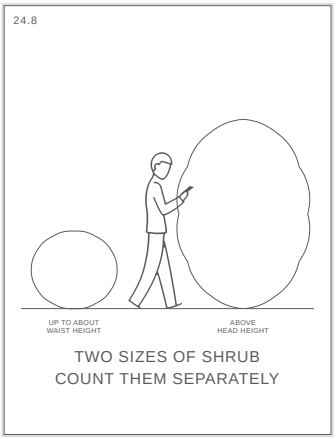
Count



Manhole covers in, or within about a metre of, where the extension goes.



Pipes within a metre: is there a rainwater downpipe, and is there a soil stack?



Shrubs and trees within 2m of where the extension goes, counted by size.

- **Manhole covers.** You must look under pots, decking and gravel. Covers get buried and forgotten.
- **Shrubs and trees.** Count four things separately: shrubs up to about waist height, shrubs above head height, young trees, and mature trees.

Look

- **How a builder would reach the back garden:** down the side of the house, a lane at the bottom of the garden wide enough to drive down, a lane too narrow to drive down, or only through the house.
- **At the front:** is there a driveway or front garden with room for a skip and for materials to be stored, room for one but not both, or none?
- **What the ground is covered in** where the proposed extension will go: grass or soil, paving, or concrete or tarmac.
- **Air bricks.** Look along the bottom of an outside wall of the existing house for small vents with a grid of holes. Air bricks usually mean a suspended timber floor. No vents usually means a solid floor.

Outside work you want put back

If you want paving, decking or grass after the build, measure the length and width of each area, or give the area in square metres. If other manhole covers sit in the area to be paved, count them. If the proposed extension needs steps down to the garden, note whether you want them in masonry to match your paving or in timber to match your decking.

Decided on screen, nothing to prepare

The roof, the windows and doors, the rooms, the heating and the finishes are chosen from drawings and pictures as you go. You will also be asked how many outside lights, switches and outside sockets you want. **The sizes and numbers you give are the sizes and numbers we price.**

Garden worksheet

Print in black. Fill it in outside, then keep it beside you while you answer. Measurements in metres.

1 · SIZE, AROUND THE OUTSIDE ☐ Across the back ☐ Down the side ☐ In an L ☐ Extending the end

A	how far it comes out from the house	**C**	how far it comes out from the side wall
	..... m		..... m
B	the length of its back wall	**D**	how far it runs along the house
	..... m		..... m

2 · WINDOWS AND DOORS THE EXTENSION WILL COVER, WIDTH X BY HEIGHT Y

Ground floor ☐ window ☐ door	..... x ..... m	Ground floor ☐ window ☐ door	..... x ..... m
Ground floor ☐ window ☐ door	..... x ..... m	First floor window	..... x ..... m
Width of the new opening into the house	..... m		

3 · SIDE AND LEVELS

Space from the side of the house to the boundary	☐ under 1.5m ☐ 1.5 to 2.5m ☐ 2.5 to 3m ☐ over 3m
Keep a path to the boundary? (at least 0.9m)	☐ No ☐ Yes, ... m wide
Ground at the new outer wall	☐ level ☐ slopes down ☐ flat, lower
If lower, by about	☐ 0.3 ☐ 0.6 ☐ 0.9 ☐ 1.2 ☐ 1.5m
Garden wall or bank within 3m of the house?	☐ No ☐ under 1m away ☐ 1 to 2m ☐ 2 to 3m
Its height, foot to top	..... m

4 · WHAT IS THERE NOW

☐ Conservatory ☐ Attached garage ☐ Lean-to		width ..... x length ..... m	
Garage: ☐ sectional ☐ brick or block · roof ☐ flat ☐ mono ☐ dual		Oil tank: ☐ none ☐ in use ☐ not in use	
Manhole covers within 1m	.....	Rainwater pipe ☐ Yes ☐ No	Soil stack ☐ Yes ☐ No
Shrubs to waist height	.....	Shrubs above head height	.....
Young trees	.....	Mature trees	.....
Ground: ☐ grass or soil ☐ paving ☐ concrete or tarmac		Air bricks: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ cannot tell	

5 · ACCESS AND OUTSIDE WORK

Builder reaches the back: ☐ down the side ☐ lane, drivable ☐ lane, too narrow ☐ only through the house			
At the front: ☐ room for a skip and storage ☐ room for one, not both ☐ none, street only			
Paving or decking	..... x ..... m	Grass	..... x ..... m
Other manhole covers in the area to be paved	.....		

reallifearchitecture.co.uk · The sizes and numbers you give are the sizes and numbers we price.