



The Garden Office

Over the past few years advances in communications technology have enabled more and more of us to work from home. Today, a purpose-built garden office is now quicker, easier and cheaper to build than a house extension or loft conversion and can be assembled onsite in a few days with minimum disruption. So how do we create the perfect Garden Office?

Choosing the right model.

New Forest Log Cabins have a wide range of models and styles to suit most needs. A quick glance at our website will give you some idea of typical shape and appearance.

Depending on the layout of your garden, you should choose a model that not only gives you the size, comfort and space you need but also blends in to the surrounding area. Our log cabins are made from natural products that look good and are designed to enhance a garden setting as well as provide functional form.

Remember, a high quality, well designed timber building that can be used for a variety of purposes such as an office, studio or accommodation can add value to any property.

So, choose a building that's in character with its surroundings and look out for special features that are tailored to suit your needs, such as French doors and windows that provide sufficient daylight and a veranda that can double up as a meeting and relaxation area in the summer months. (And also makes an ideal place for a BBQ to suit our traditional English climate!)

Position

Respect your neighbours' sightlines when choosing where to put your building, and consider not only the view from your own home, but also the outlook from your office. Don't just plonk the office wherever your old shed was or have it staring right back at the house. If space permits, why not take a sideways look? Consider landscaping the area to provide a suitable outlook or choose some distant focal point as the view from your desk to exercise your eyes after straining at the computer.

Interior

The size and the internal specifications will depend upon your budget and the kind of work you do, but there are a few key points. An office that's suitable for all-year working should have insulated walls, floor and roof. You should opt for a minimum of 45 mm wall thickness and select double glazed windows and doors.

You'll need electric radiators or wall mounted convector heaters to provide winter warmth and maybe air conditioning or a fan to keep cool in the summer. Windows and doors should be fitted with good quality security locks and a burglar alarm installed if you plan to keep valuable equipment in the building.

Doors and windows come as standard in our log cabins and can usually be configured to suit the layout and orientation of your building.

Base

The site itself should be firm and level. A six inch cast concrete base is the ideal, but old railway sleepers, stone chippings or paving slabs will be fine in many cases. Don't place your office directly on the ground as you could be troubled by damp or get an awful sinking feeling after heavy rainfall.

During installation you will need to run an armoured cable from your household fuse-box, and unless you opt for wireless-based technology you will also need direct telephone links. Lay them at the same time, and allow some surplus capacity for upgrades. Preparatory ground-works are usually your responsibility, so remember to budget for them separately.

Planning: A Guide for Householders is a helpful government leaflet available free from local planning authorities. It is also available online at www.odpm.gov.uk

Do you need permission?

If you submit a sketch showing the details and dimensions of the proposed building, and its position in relation to your house, your local authority should be able to advise within 14 days whether planning permission is required.

However, it shouldn't be necessary if:

- The roof is no higher than 4m (13ft).
- It doesn't stand between your home and the highway.
- It is located at least 5m from your dwelling house and a reasonable distance from boundary lines (usually at least 1m).
- It occupies no more than half your garden.
- You do not live in a Conservation Area or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

If permission isn't required, consider obtaining a Certificate of Lawfulness from your planning authority. There's a small fee, but it could be useful proof in the future that everything is legitimate.