

Thatch as a building material

Thatch is a traditional roofing material enjoying renewed popularity in many rural areas. Thatch has advantages over other roofing materials. It:

- is adaptable to different roof designs
- is light in weight
- gives good thermal insulation
- does not usually require rainwater goods
- is acceptable to conservation organisations

However it also has disadvantages. It:

- is traditionally a fire hazard
- incurs a high cost for fire insurance
- requires extensive distances between dwellings
- and to boundaries to prevent fire spread
- is open to damage by birds

Listed buildings

The information in this leaflet relates only to the requirements for the use of thatch on a new building or for the first time on an old building. It does not necessarily apply to the traditional use of thatch on an historic or a listed building, and it is not a definitive statement of the Building Regulations requirements. However, it is important to discuss the use of thatch at the earliest opportunity and not wait until you have obtained planning approval.

In some circumstances permission may be required to re-thatch the roof of a listed building. For information on this please ask the planning staff at the relevant area office.



More information is available from:

✉ Building Control, Building Control, South Somerset District Council, Brympton Way, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2HT

💻 www.southsomerset.gov.uk/buildingcontrol

☎ 01935 462462
(8am to 6pm Monday to Friday)

✉ buildingcontrol@southsomerset.gov.uk



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If you would like this document translated into other languages or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please contact:

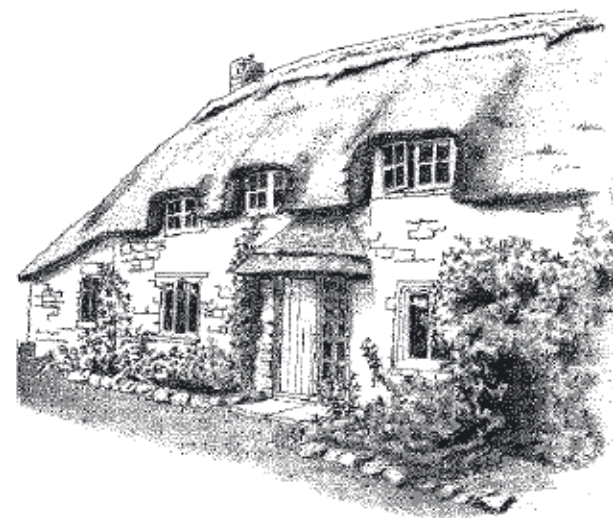
☎ **01935 462462**

Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany w językowych polskim.

Este documento encontra-se disponível em Português, a pedido.

Building Control Services

Thatched Buildings



Guidance Leaflet - 11

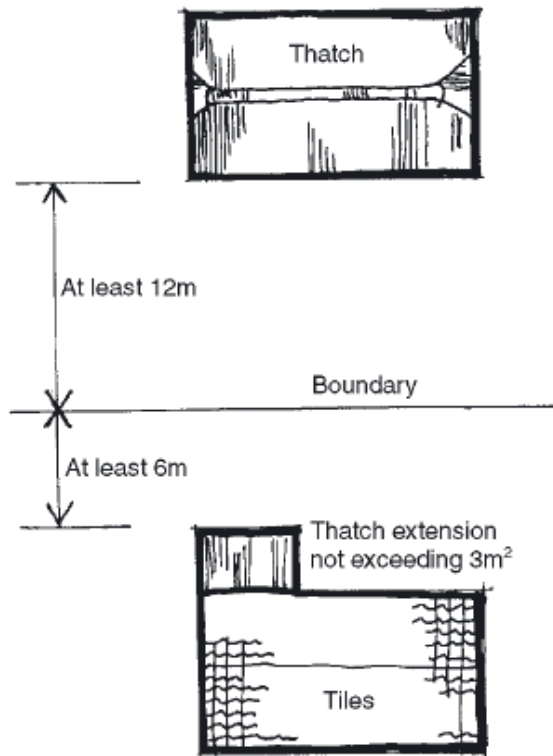


Introduction

The Building Regulations 2000

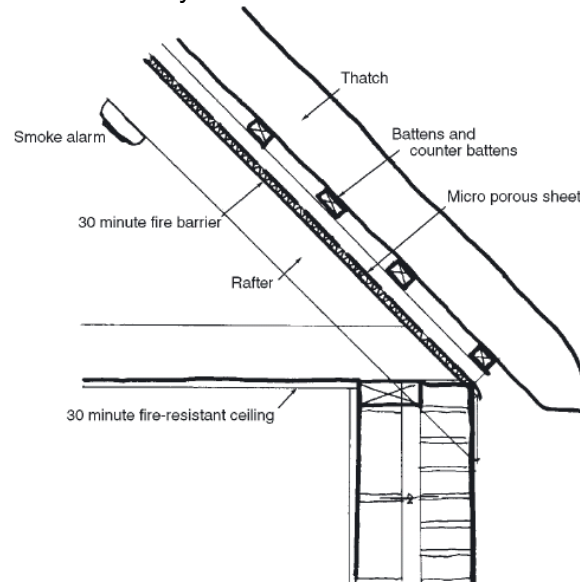
Regulation B4 requires that the roof of a building shall offer adequate resistance to the spread of fire over the roof and from one building to another, having regard to the use and position of the building.

Thatched buildings generally should be at least 12m from a boundary except that separating semi-detached houses. Small (3m²) thatched extensions may be as near as 6m to a boundary.



Requirements

- Rafters to be overdrawn with minimum 30-minute water-resisting fire barrier and 50 x 25mm counter battens are recommended on a micro-porous sheet.
- The chimney, including the pot, should terminate at least 1.8m above the ridge height. due to the risk of condensation forming as hot gases cool, chimney pots should not exceed 600mm high.
- A domestic mains- and battery-powered, interlinked smoke alarm should be fitted, including one unit fitted in the roof void.
- Written comments of adjoining property owners will be requested by the local authority for consideration.



- The provision of a loft hatch for fire fighting purposes. The minimum size should be 600 x 900mm.
- Any metal plumbing in roof spaces should use compression joints to avoid the use of blow torches.

- Advice should be sought from an approved electrical contractor regarding the most appropriate type of wiring system. The National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contractors has issued guidance to its members.
- Light fittings in the room below should be bulkhead type and NOT recessed fittings cut into the ceiling. External floodlights should not be located under the eaves.
- Spark arresters on flues should NOT be fitted as they can clog and restrict the flow of flue gases.
- An external tap should be provided, supplied from the rising main and fitted with a hose pipe capable of reaching all parts of the roof.

(These Guidelines are based on the 'Dorset Model')

Repairs or replacement of Thatch

A new regulation was introduced in April 2006 requiring that where a person intends to renovate a thermal element, such work shall be carried out as necessary to ensure the whole thermal element meets specified thermal standards. A thermal element is basically any part of an external wall, roof or ground / exposed floor. This regulation only applies when more than 25% of a thermal element is being renovated, so minor patching would not be controlled.

As thatch is an insulating material it is unlikely that you will be asked to install any additional insulation, however advice can be sought from your local building control office.

Replacement thatch or the recovering of existing thatch now falls with-in the scope of the Building Regulations and as such an application should be made.