

LOG CABIN rules



Do you want a log cabin on your land? Nick Forrester provides an invaluable checklist of the top 10 things to consider before signing on the dotted line

Do you dream of living in a Scandinavian-style log cabin on your land? Well, if so, you are not alone. A growing number of rural landowners in the UK are falling for the unique look, feel and smell of such a home, as well as the added attraction of natural thermal insulation and minimal maintenance that solid log offers.

With modern log homes now available in an array of shapes and on-trend designs, it is no surprise that over recent years suppliers have seen a big surge in demand from both farmers and smallholders. Commonly used for farm dwellings on smallholdings, and for housing farmworkers or family members such as retired parents, a log home can often be the ideal solution to a rural accommodation dilemma.

But critically, what are the actual rules

for placing one of these structures on agricultural land, and what should you look for when choosing a supplier? To answer these questions we have teamed up with leading supplier, Norwegian Log Buildings, in order to bring you our Top 10 list of all the essential things to consider before you start the buying process.

1. CHECK THE LOCAL RULINGS

Just because you own your land, do not expect planners to allow you automatically to build on it. Quite rightly, planning laws are very rigorous, and there are many restrictions that apply to building new homes in the countryside as part of the NPPF (National Planning Policy

Framework), Paragraph 55. The current minimum size criteria for a smallholding is 7½ acres, so if your land measures less than this it will certainly be more difficult to get planning permission.

2. PROVE THAT YOU HAVE A NEED

If you currently reside elsewhere you will need to demonstrate a proven requirement to live on the land in order to look after your livestock. If the only animals you keep are horses, be aware they are not considered to be agricultural livestock, as they fall under the equine category, although you *may* be able to prove a case if you breed horses.

Nick's Tip!

Employ a specialist agricultural planning consultant with considerable local knowledge and experience to help you through the minefield of negotiating with local authorities. Do not waste your time with a general planning consultant, as, in my view, they just won't have the knowledge and experience.

4. STUDY THE CARAVAN ACT

If there is an existing mobile home on the land and you can demonstrate someone has lived in it for over ten years continuously, then you can apply for a Certificate of Lawful Use to replace it with a new temporary structure or dwelling. Transportable log cabins should conform to this under the Caravan Act, but have to measure no more than 20m long x 6.8m wide (65ft x 22ft).

"A professional business plan will be needed that is 100 per cent bulletproof, otherwise your application simply won't pass 'go' in the planning department"

5. NEVER CUT CORNERS

If the log cabin needs to be transportable, then your supplier must prove to the local authority that it is just that. Concrete foundations are not needed in these cases. Suspended, insulated timber floors are normally integral, which can be placed on simple block piers or jack pads. Whatever you decide, make sure to buy from a reputable company that is used to designing and assembling transportable homes.

Nick says...

"You'd be amazed how large a 20m x 6.8m space is. Within the allowed size, Norwegian Log Buildings have a portfolio of sixteen different designs, ranging from a one-bedroom home, right through to a three-/four-bedroom lodge with en suite, a family bathroom, a utility, a kitchen/diner and a lounge, plus a large deck. You can also choose from traditional log home styling or our new contemporary Inovar range, which boasts bi-fold doors, glass frontages, and light and spacious interiors."

Nick Forrester is Managing Director of Norwegian Log Buildings, which has been supplying log homes to rural customers for over twenty-five years.

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3. NOW BUILD UP YOUR CASE

A detailed business plan will need to be submitted, along with the planning application, demonstrating that within three years the business will be profitable, sustainable and earning you at least the equivalent of an agricultural wage. If you live in Scotland, slightly different rules apply to those in England and Wales, so check with your local planning authority on how this might impact your application.





6. PLAN ACCESS IN ADVANCE

Think in advance about delivery access to the site, as a large lorry or crane may be needed. A professional company will visit in advance and assess access arrangements, delivering the structure in parts and assembling it all on site, if required. You may want to alert your neighbours if you think access to their properties could be temporarily affected.

“The best tip I could give to any smallholder or farmer, is to employ a specialist agricultural planning consultant. It will save you money in the long run. A good manufacturer will help you with this”

7. CHOOSE YOUR WOOD WISELY

Make sure the timber used in construction is from responsibly managed, sustainable forests, grown slowly in the north of Europe with a low moisture content. You want your home to last for years – there are log cabins in Scandinavia that are more than a thousand years old! Faster-growing timber will not be robust enough for a home in the longer term.



8. CONTACT ALL THE UTILITIES

As with any new home, plan your utilities. Talk to your electricity, telephone, gas and water suppliers in advance so you understand their lead times, as these may well be longer than you think.



9. REMEMBER TO GET INSURED!

Providing you are dealing with a reputable supplier, getting your log home insured should not be a problem. There is a range of insurance firms serving the market offering competitive rates.

10. CHECK OUT THOSE REFERENCES

Finally, and most importantly, check the provenance of the product you are just about to buy. Is your supplier able to take you to see one of their buildings that is over five years old so you can see how it has weathered and coped with the rigours of rural life? Can the firm provide a list of customers as referees so you can chat to existing log home owners?

Buying a home, no matter what it is constructed of, is one of the most important decisions you will ever make, so do your homework, and do not be afraid to ask lots of questions.

IN CONCLUSION...

Follow these 10 simple guidelines and the dream of having a real solid log home on your land could soon become reality.

To read more about planning permission go to homefarmer.co.uk/getting-planning-permission-log-cabins-mobile-homes/

It's a mobile home? You're kidding!



It's true. Norwegian Log transportable homes are treated as mobile homes for Planning purposes.

If you thought you'd have to settle for a caravan on your smallholding, it's time you looked at our transportable homes. These are real homes. Real assets, not something that has to be replaced every few years.

They meet all the requirements of the new National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 55, for rural development and your Certificate of Lawful Development or other permission specifying a mobile home or timber structure.

And our range includes homes up to 20m x 6.8m fully compliant with the Caravan Act.

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