

When getting quotes for a home extension in 2026, one of the trickiest yet crucial aspects to verify is whether contractors are pricing based on the **same measured floor area**. Without this, you risk comparing apples to oranges—potentially paying more or ending up with less space than you expected. This guide breaks down the key steps and considerations to help you *check for a sqm mismatch in quotes*, understand regional cost advantages, and navigate planning constraints specific to Rugby and the wider Midlands region.

Why Square Metres Matter So Much in Extension Quotes

Builders typically price extensions per square metre (sqm), as it's a straightforward measure of work volume. However, the definition of that sqm can vary between quotes depending on:

- Whether gross internal floor area or external dimensions are used
- Inclusion or exclusion of walls, porches, or ancillary spaces
- How multi-storey areas are calculated—floor by floor or as a footprint

Simple differences can lead to significant cost surprises. For example, if one quote is based on 30 sqm while another assumes 25 sqm, even the same per-sqm rate results in markedly different totals. Before you discuss price, ask specifically **“Is your quote based on measured floor area or something else?”** Always request clear, itemised stage breakdowns—not lump sums.

How to Check Measured Floor Area and Avoid a Sqm Mismatch

Your best defence against a sqm mismatch is comparing apples with apples. Here's how to keep your checks rigorous:

1. Compare Drawings, Not Descriptions

Words like “large extension” mean little without dimensioned drawings. Ask each contractor for floor plans showing:

- External wall lengths
- Internal room dimensions
- Floor area calculations with their method clearly stated

Drag out your tape measure from the architectural drawings, or get a professional measurement to verify on-site. These drawings should align with your approved planning or permitted development plans.

2. Understand Single-Storey vs Two-Storey Tradeoffs

Two-storey extensions may double your usable floorspace while keeping your footprint—and thus groundwork costs—smaller. But expect higher costs per sqm for upper-floor finishes and stricter planning scrutiny. Single-storey extensions often have simpler build rules and cheaper groundworks but demand more garden space.

Frequent confusion causes sqm mismatches in quotes when one builder assumes two floors adding up floor areas to price, while another quotes only the ground-floor footprint.

3. Request a Clear Breakdown: Does the Quote Include VAT?

I *always* ask if VAT is included before I start discussing design or change requests. A 20% VAT difference on a sizeable extension can distort your perceived sq m cost. Make sure builders' prices are directly comparable.

2026 Extension Costs and Regional Labour Cost Advantages

When checking your sqm rates, keep in mind:

Region Approximate Cost per Square Metre (£) Notes
Rugby & Midlands £1,700 - £2,400 Labour is competitive, with lower overhead than London
London & South East £2,200 - £3,500 Higher labour and site costs push prices up

This cost advantage reflects Rugby's vibrant local trades and less congested building sites. It means your quotes from Midlands builders can often stretch your budget further than south-east counterparts. However, beware of quotes priced unrealistically low as this can mean skimmed specifications or omitted items.

Planning Permission, Permitted Development, and Conservation Areas

Before comparing sqm rates or finalising your extension's scope, you need to understand the planning context:

- **Permitted Development Rights:** Many single-storey rear extensions under 6 metres (detached) or 8 metres (semi-detached) don't require full planning permission but must comply with size, height, and neighbour impact rules.
- **Lawful Development Certificates:** Rugby Borough Council offers a *lawful development certificate* process to confirm if your extension qualifies as permitted development. This can be faster and cheaper than full planning.
- **Conservation Areas:** Rugby and other Midlands towns have conservation areas where stricter controls apply, limiting the size, style, and materials of extensions.

Each of these factors influences your design, which in turn alters measured floor area and cost. Getting your planning status confirmed early helps avoid costly scope changes—and thus surprises in your extension quote.

Using the HomeOwners Alliance Cost of Moving Calculator to Inform Your Extension Budget

Before committing to what may be a several-hundred-thousand-pound extension, it pays to check the cost of moving instead—which sometimes makes more financial sense.

You know what's funny? the homeowners alliance (hoa) cost of moving calculator factors in house price differentials, fees, and taxes to estimate your expenses. You can compare this with your sq m extension costs to evaluate whether an extension or a move offers better value.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid When Reviewing Extension Quotes

1. **Lump-Sum Quotes With No Stage Breakdown:** Don't accept a single total quote without a clear breakdown for design, groundwork, structure, finishes, and contingencies. Without it, you can't assess sqm rate accuracy or spot scope differences.
2. **Builders Pricing From Verbal Briefs:** Quotes based purely on a phone chat or loose descriptions often miss key elements—leading to re-quotes or cost overruns.

3. **Spending the Contingency Too Early:** Watch that your contingency (usually 10-15% of project cost) isn't eaten up by early changes or site surprises. Always compare the original sqm pricing against actual invoiced amounts as work proceeds.

Summary Checklist: How To Verify Extension Quotes Are Based on the Same Square Metres

- Ask if the quote's square metres are measured floor area or external footprint
- Request dimensioned drawings and compare floor areas yourself
- Confirm whether VAT is included to compare total costs fairly
- Clarify if the extension is single-storey or two-storey, and how that impacts sqm
- Check planning status with Rugby Borough Council and whether a lawful development certificate applies
- Use regional cost averages to benchmark if quotes look reasonable
- Review all quotes with a detailed breakdown rather than lump sums

Final Thoughts

Checking that your extension quotes use the same measured floor area is more than just a box-ticking exercise. It's fundamental to making **permitted development rules** an informed choice and avoiding escalating costs on your home project. Armed with proper drawings, clarity on planning rules, and knowledge of regional pricing, you can confidently compare quotes and design a stunning new space that fits your budget and ambition.



Remember: always ask upfront about how the sqm was calculated, insist on VAT-inclusive pricing, and keep a mental checklist for potential groundworks surprises—which can quietly inflate costs beyond that per-square-metre figure. With these measures, you'll sidestep common pitfalls and get a fair deal on your Rugby or Midlands extension in 2026.

