



Directorate for the Built Environment  
Building Standards Division

## ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING WCS, BATHROOMS AND SHOWER ROOMS TO 1 AND 2 STOREY HOUSES

This leaflet is designed to help you if you are intending to carry out alterations to existing WCs bathrooms and shower rooms. There is no need to obtain a building warrant for the simple projects described in this leaflet, but the work you undertake must meet the requirements of the building regulations. The guidance in this leaflet will explain one way that this can be achieved but it is acceptable not to follow this guidance as there are other ways of meeting the building regulations.

This leaflet does not cover houses which have a floor level higher than 4.5 m above outside ground level, and does not apply to flats or maisonettes. The guidance does not cover more complex work, such as where you intend to remove a loadbearing wall. Such work will require a warrant and you should check with the Building Standards Department of your local authority. It is against the law to start work without first obtaining a building warrant, when one is needed.

### 1. SPACE FOR FACILITIES ON THE PRINCIPAL LIVING LEVEL

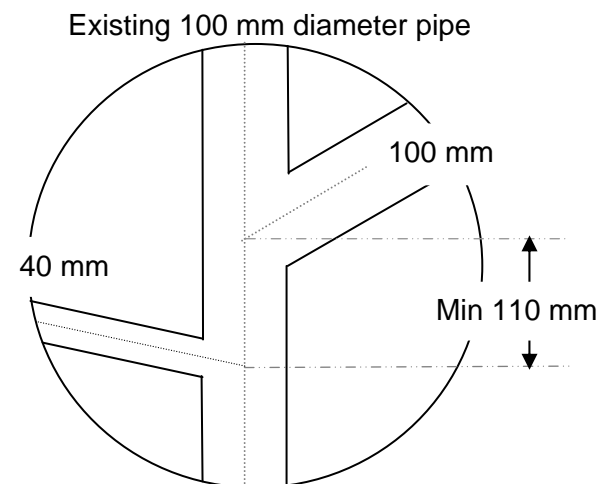
At least one WC, wash hand basin and bath or shower must be accessible to all people by having an activity space in front of each facility. The activity space must be provided when either relocating or adding new appliances within the toilet, bathroom or shower room on the storey which contains the living room and kitchen. A replaced or relocated facility within the room must be provided with an activity space in front of it of the size shown below, or of a size no less than that provided in its original location. A new WC, bath, shower or wash basin within the room must have an activity space of the size shown below. This is not necessary when there is already another WC, bath, shower or wash basin with that size of activity space on that storey. If the room is too small to accommodate a new facility and the activity space, you should seek the advice of your local authority building standards department. A wall mounted wash basin may encroach up to 100 mm into the activity space of other facilities, and a door may swing over an activity space as long as there is space for a wheel chair user to get into the room and close the door.

In mm	Width	Depth	Height
<b>Bath</b>	1200	800	1800
<b>Shower</b>	800	800	1800
<b>Basin</b>	800	700	1800
<b>WC</b>	800	1100	1800

### 2. PLUMBING

The addition of a WC, bath, shower, wash hand basin, bidet in any combination to an existing bathroom requires that the waste pipes from these must be connected into an existing soil vent pipe or to a branch pipe leading to the soil vent pipe using proprietary connectors.

All appliances must be fitted with a deep seal trap and be connected separately to the vent/branch pipe using a 40 mm diameter plastic pipe (100 mm in the case of a WC). The pipe must be laid to a fall, towards the vent/branch pipe, of not less than 1 in 60. The new appliance must not be more than 3 m from the vent pipe.



**Connection to existing vertical stack/vent pipe (not to scale)**

When replacing or relocating a bath or bidet where the work involves alteration to the hot and cold supply pipework a thermostatic mixer valve must be fitted.

### **3. ELECTRICS**

#### **Sockets**

There must be no electrical sockets or switches in the bathroom other than a dedicated shaver socket and pull cord switches.

#### **Recessed lights**

It is important that recessed light fittings are installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions particularly with regards to maintaining free air movement around the holder for cooling and for the avoidance of wetting.

The existing insulation to the roof space must not be compromised by the addition of the recessed lights. When fitting the recessed lights, the floor/roof structure must not be affected.

**Note** - All electrical installations must be carried out by a competent installer, for example a member of SELECT or NICEIC.

### **4. VENTILATION**

#### **Natural**

Replacement windows must have an opening area of not less than the opening area of the original window.

If the old window has a trickle ventilator then the replacement window must also have a trickle ventilator of an equal size or larger. If

the old window did not have a trickle ventilator then it is not necessary to install one although it is strongly recommended that one is fitted to help control relative humidity in the room.

The replacement window must in all other respects meet the requirements of the building regulations (see leaflet on replacement windows).

#### **Mechanical extract**

An extract fan does not need to be installed into an existing bathroom, but it is recommended that one is fitted to help remove excess water vapour, especially when a shower is added to the room. Where there is a fan in the bathroom already, it can be replaced but it must not be removed. Where a fan is fitted it must be ducted directly to the outside air and it must have an extraction rate of at least 15 litres per second.

Extract fans that are installed to operate when the bathroom light is on and are in bathrooms without a window, must be wired through an isolator switch to separate the light from the fan. This will allow the fan to be cleaned/repared whilst the light is on.

In the case where a mechanical extract fan is being fitted to the bathroom, shower room or WC when previously there was not a fan, any replacement window to those rooms need not meet the guidance for natural ventilation as the room will be adequately ventilated via the new extract fan. Additionally, an extract fan should not be

fitted within 2 m of a bath or shower unless the fan operates under low voltage and is suitable for that location. Check with the manufacturer's installation guidance.

### **5. WALL/CEILING LININGS**

Redecoration of the bathroom will usually be carried out after substantial alterations have been carried out. Papering on existing plasterboard and repainting can be carried out without problem. However some wall linings can cause serious fire risks and care must be taken. Where timber wall and ceiling linings are used they must be protected from fire spread by the application of a fire retardant coating.

### **6. GENERAL**

You should ensure that you are aware of your statutory obligations under building regulations, planning legislation and any other relevant permission and that any firm or person employed to carry out work is competent.

Building Standards Division provides guidance on how to comply with the building regulations and this can be accessed on their web site at [www.sbsa.gov.uk](http://www.sbsa.gov.uk). Follow the links to 'Documents' 'Technical Handbooks' 'Domestic Handbook'.