

ADVISORY NOTES

The Building Act 1984 The Building Regulations 2000

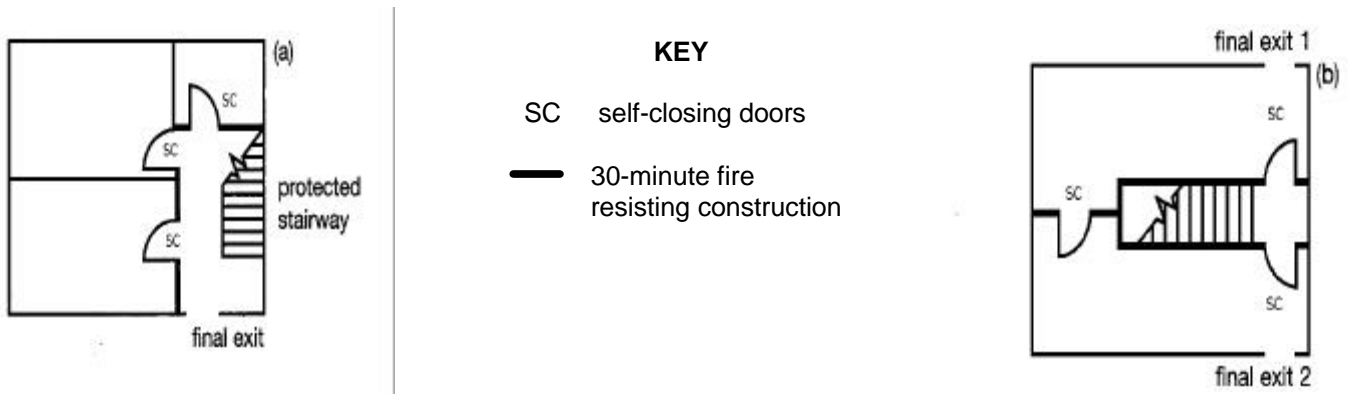


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If you are thinking about converting your loft to create an additional habitable room, whether for sleeping purposes or not, then you will need to apply for Building Regulations approval. You may also need Planning Permission if you live in a conservation area and/or are installing a dormer window. This guidance note tells you about the more basic requirements that need to be considered when converting a roof space. If you can't achieve these then your loft may not be suitable for conversion. If in doubt contact Solihull Building Control who will be pleased to help. The guidance only applies to two storey houses where the new storey is not more than 50 square metres, does not create more than two habitable rooms within the roof space and the existing ridge is not raised.

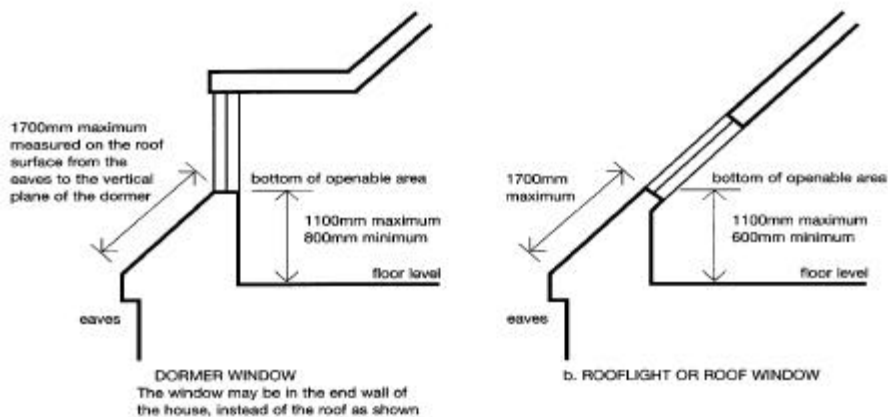
1. Does your staircase discharge to a final exit?

At ground floor the existing stairs must be in an enclosed hall (a) or offer an alternative escape (b) to a final exit door. Therefore if you have an open plan staircase it will have to be enclosed.



2. Can you provide a suitable escape window from the new second floor?

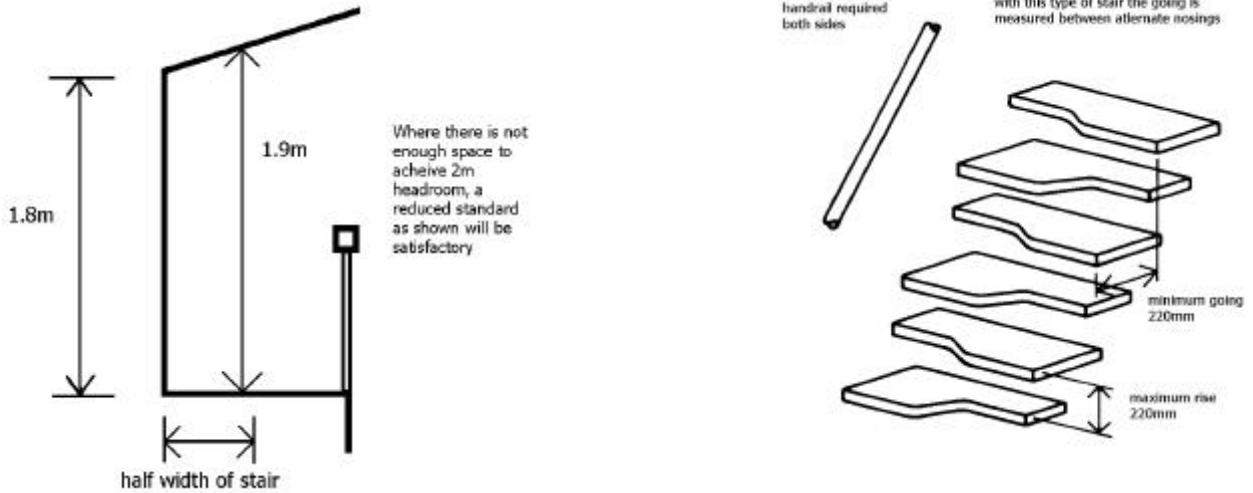
Existing purlins are often in the way when positioning an escape window. If the purlin needs moving to achieve the 1.7 metre dimension then the stability of the existing roof may need to be justified by structural calculation.



Note: it is not considered necessary for the escape window shown in diagram (b) to be provided with safety glazing.

3. Can you achieve a suitable head height over the new stairs?

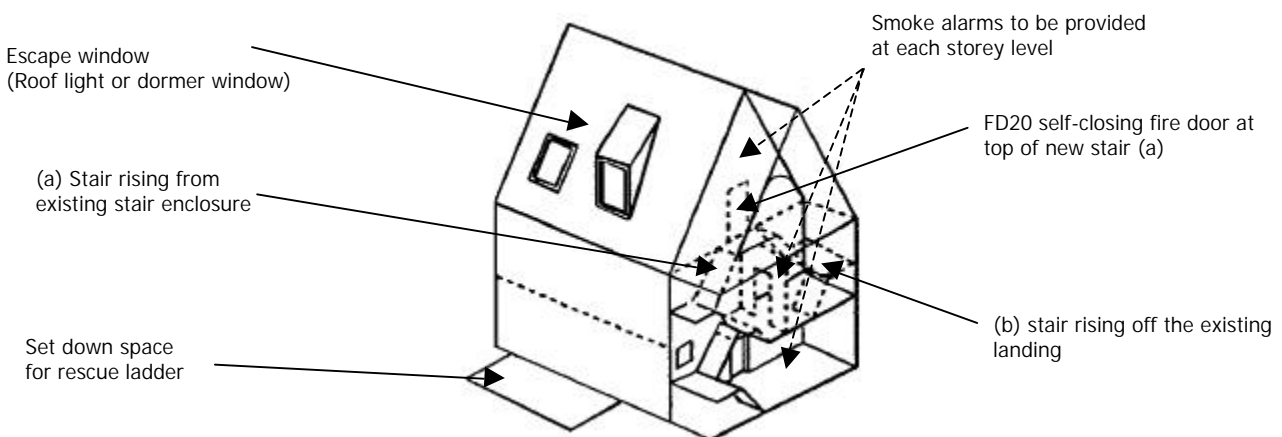
Another key area is positioning of and the headroom to the staircase. The headroom over the new stair should be at least 2 metres although it can be reduced in agreement with the Building Control Surveyor if headroom is limited. A standard staircase should be installed wherever possible. However, an alternate tread stair can be used where there is insufficient space to accommodate a standard stair, but must only serve one room.



4. Meeting Fire safety provisions

The diagram below shows you what will also be needed to provide a satisfactory route of escape in the event of fire

- The enclosing walls to the existing stair at ground and first floor level should achieve a 30-minute period of fire-resistance (e.g. plasterboard and stud or block). The stair enclosure must lead directly to outside or through alternative (and separated) rooms to outside. Doors must be self-closing and any glazed panels should be changed for fire-resisting glass. (Glass in walls and doors to a bathroom do not need to be fire resisting).
- The new stair serving the converted loft can either a) continue up in existing stair enclosure or b) can rise off the existing landing by, for example adapting an existing bedroom to accommodate the new stair. If a) is adopted then the room in the roof will need to be separated from the existing accommodation by the provision of a fire door at the top of the new stair. If b) then the fire door can either be at the top of the new stair or on the first floor landing



- You must ensure there is access and space outside the property to set ladders below the escape window to allow rescue in the event of persons becoming trapped by fire in the new second floor room.
- The new loft floor must have 30-minutes fire resistance
- A mains wired, inter-linked smoke alarm system must be installed
- Escape windows should be provided for each habitable room in the loft having an unobstructed openable area that is at least 0.33m² and a minimum 450mm high and 450mm wide (the route through the window may be at an angle rather than straight through). The bottom of the openable area should be not more than 1100mm above the floor.

5.0 What next?

The next step is to seek professional advice to cover a host of other regulations such as structural stability, thermal insulation, ventilation etc.

It is recommended you have plans properly prepared. This will enable the design to be checked and any difficulties overcome before your builder starts work on-site. A plan will also give you the basis of a contract with your builder. Quotes from different builders will be for the same work and you will be confident that there should be no hidden extras when work starts.