

Accessible adaptations

Making adaptations for better accessibility fall under the same planning and building regulations as other alterations and extensions to a home.

This guide relates to typical modifications made to improve access, safety, and independence for people living with a disability, both inside and around the property. Many adaptations can be carried out without planning permission, provided certain limits and conditions are met, but building regulations approval may still be required.

1) Access

Planning: Adding a permanent wheelchair ramp for access to a home is likely to require planning permission as it will change the external appearance of the front of the house. If the application is solely for improving disabled access to the building, then the planning application will be exempt from a fee.

Fold away and moveable ramps which are designed to be temporary are unlikely to require planning permission.

Building control: All permanent wheelchair ramps must comply with Approved Document M and K of the building regulations which specify standards for accessibility and protection from falling.

The gradient of a ramp should be no more than 1:12, with rest platforms of at least 1200mm in length.

Handrails should be installed at specified heights.

Doorway widening

Widening or creating a new external doorway will likely fall under permitted development rights, meaning an application for planning permission is not required provided you meet limits and



If the change is on the side or rear of the building, it is more likely to not require an application for planning permission.

Widening doorways, both internal and external, must comply with building regulations as they may impact the structure of a building.

[Read more in the doors and windows common project.](#)

New ground floor accommodation and toilet

Creating new ground floor accommodation and toilet facilities will likely require an extension to be built. The creation of an extension is classed as permitted development, meaning an application for planning permission is not required provided certain limits and conditions are met.

Whether the change is being made for accessibility or otherwise, the same planning and building regulation rules will apply. Full details around the limits and conditions are available on our [single-storey](#) or [two-storey extension](#) mini guides.

2) Mobility

Hoists

Mechanical aids such as hoists which can lift a person from a bed to a wheelchair will not require planning permission, they are also not likely to require building control approval.

Building control: All permanent wheelchair ramps must comply with Approved Document M and K of the building regulations which specify standards for accessibility and protection from falling.

The gradient of a ramp should be no more than 1:12, with rest platforms of at least 1200mm in length. Handrails should be installed at specified heights.

Stairlifts and lifts

Planning permission is not required for the installation of an internal stair lift, platform lift or enclosed lift.

Enclosed lifts and platform lifts which are installed internally must comply with building regulations relating to accessibility, fire safety, structural stability and electrical safety.

Stairlifts must be installed in line with BS EN 81-40:2020 which focuses on safety requirements for the installation of stairlifts.

A reputable installer or member of a competent person scheme will help ensure that any change complies with the relevant standards.

Handrails and grab rails

No planning permission is required to install an internal handrail or grab rail.

Accessibility handrails should be between 900mm and 1100mm in height from the stairs, with a tube which is wide enough for users to have an adequate grip.



The handrail should not extend into the staircase by more than 100mm.

Where stairs are more than one metre wide, a handrail must be installed on both sides.

3) Accessible bathrooms

Walk-in showers and wetrooms

Planning permission is not required for internal changes such as changing a bathroom to an accessible wetroom or changing a shower to a walk-in shower.

Building regulations approval will likely be required for changes to make a bathroom accessible, specifically when the change will impact the structure of the room, drainage, ventilation and electrical systems.

Approval will likely be required where a bathroom or wetroom is added where there was not before.

It is recommended to have work completed by a member of the competent person scheme.

Adjustable sinks and toilets

A wide range of adjustable sinks and toilets are available for bathrooms, these help to cater for differing needs such as impaired movement or vision.

Changing an existing toilet or sink to an adjustable or accessible option will not require planning permission or building control approval.

4) Accessible kitchens

Lowered countertops

Lowered countertops, or adaptive countertops which are height adjustable can improve the ease of preparing food. No permissions are required to change the height of kitchen countertops.

Induction hobs

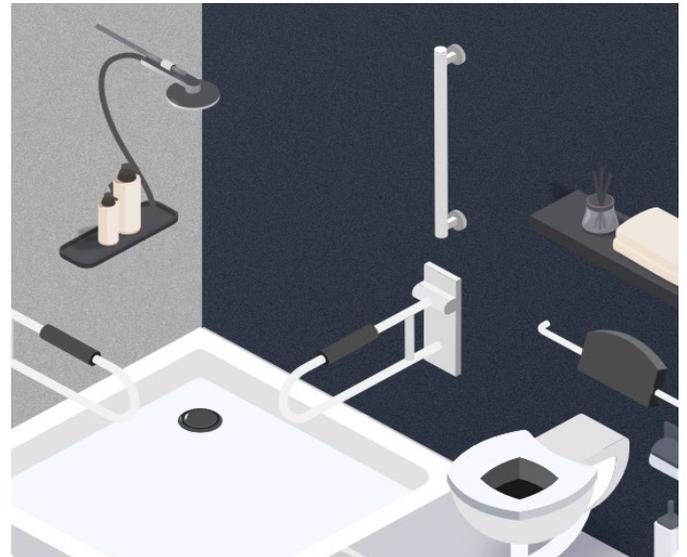
Induction hobs can be installed as a safer alternative to other hobs. They only heat when a metal pan is on them and cool down quickly after cooking. There are no legal requirements to adhere to when installing an induction hob. You should meet the requirements set out by the manufacturer to ensure sufficient ventilation is provided.

If a new circuit is created as part of the work this must comply with building regulations.

5) Safety

Door-entry systems

Installing intercoms, wireless doorbells and video-entry systems can allow you to see and communicate with visitors. There are no permissions required for installing a door-entry system of this kind. If a new circuit is created as part of the work this must comply with building regulations.



Alert devices

No planning approval is required to install alarms in your home, but the work will need to comply with building regulations. All new homes should be fitted with smoke alarms on each storey, including on hallways. Heat alarms should be used in kitchens. These alarms must be interlinked so when one device is triggered, they all activate.

You can install battery powered alarm kits in rooms where necessary, these will provide an additional layer of security if any issues occur. These are often installed in toilets.

Contrasting treads

Painting or adding contrasting strips to stair treads improves depth perception and reduces slipperiness. No planning or building regulations approval is required for this change.

Changed flooring

Changing your flooring will not require planning permission or building regulations approval. Moving from carpet to a smooth surface such as hardwood or vinyl can reduce tripping hazards.

6) Lighting

Indoor lighting

Additional lighting can improve visibility and reduce the likelihood of falls. You may wish to install sensor lights or smart lights which automatically activate when they sense movement or based on a timer.

On internal stairways, it is advisable to have a light switch at the top and bottom of stairs to ensure adequate lighting at all times.

Outdoor lighting

Light itself, and minor domestic light fittings, are not subject to planning controls.

Nevertheless, if you are planning to install external lighting for security or other purposes, you should ensure that the intensity and direction of light does not disturb others.

Ensure that beams are not pointed directly at windows of other houses and any timers or security lights will have minimal impact on neighbours.

If a new circuit is created as part of the work this must comply with building regulations.

Reasonable provisions should be made to ensure that new light fittings are energy efficient.



7) Related information

Listed buildings

If you live in a listed building, you will have to apply for listed building consent for any significant works, whether internal or external.

Planning fees

All applications for planning permission which are solely to improve access, safety or comfort to a disabled person's dwellinghouse will be exempt from planning fees.

Disabled Facilities Grants

If you are disabled and need to make a change to your home relating to accessibility, such as widening doors or installing ramps [you may be able to get a grant from your council](#).

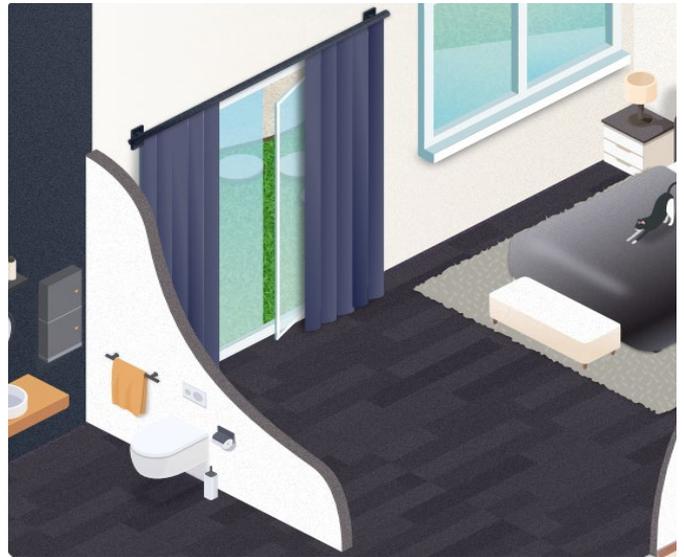
Important information

For Wales

This guidance relates to the planning regime for England. Policy in Wales may differ. Contact your local planning authority for further information.

Disclaimer

Users should note that this is an introductory guide and is not a definitive source of legal information. [Read full disclaimer.](#)



If you are in any doubt you should contact your local authority before undertaking any work.

Important note

- The permitted development allowances described here apply to houses, not flats, maisonettes or other buildings.
- You should check with your local planning authority whether permitted development rights apply – they may have been removed by what are known as Article 4 directions.
- Other consents may be required if your house is listed or in a designated area.
- When planning work, you should read all the advice on the Planning Portal under '[Your responsibilities – Other considerations before you start work](#)'. As well as other important information you will find guidance here on the permitted development regime.

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