

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED... ADDING A NEW BATHROOM

Are you are considering creating a new bathroom or updating your existing one? This panel of industry experts solves a selection of your most common planning, design and fitting problems

EXPERT ADVICE

Answering your letters this month



BILL NOBLE
Managing director of WowLighting (www.wowlighting.co.uk)



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Interior designer (www.carolebox.co.uk)



MARTIN SWATTON
Property developer and designer at Martin Swatton Design (www.martinswatton.com)



HELEN BRUNSKILL
Principal architect of Brunskill Design (www.brunskilldesign.com)



PHILIP PORTER
Bathroom fitter at Zaffa Installations (www.zaffa.net)



LEE RICHARDS
RatedPeople.com-registered plumber from Water Trade Ltd (0800 085 9043)

We desperately need another bathroom in our house – what are our options?

Helen Brunskill says: 'You can add a single-storey extension to the side of your home without having to apply for planning permission, provided you meet a set of national limits and conditions that came into force in 2008.'

'The new rules apply mainly to the dimensions of the proposed extension, its position on the house and proximity to your boundaries. For example, a single-storey side extension must have a maximum height of 4m and a width no more than half that of the original house. It's always wise to check your interpretation of the rules with your local planning department.'

'You'll also need to apply for planning permission if the extension is to be located nearer to any highway than the original house, or if more than half the area of land around the house is to be covered by additions or new buildings. For further details on the planning permission rules for UK homes, visit the Government's Planning Portal website (see below).'

'You will need to advise your local authority building control department about any changed or additional drainage work that needs to be carried out, too. The local water company should also be notified about re-routing of drains if it's required outside the house and any other water supply changes. This will usually be tackled by your architect, designer or specialist company as part of the design process.'



Find this user-friendly interactive 3-D guide to planning permission at www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/hhg/house_guide.html

The Planning Portal is the Government's online planning and Building Regulations resource for England and Wales. Use this website to learn about Building Regs and

planning, apply for consent, find out about developments near you, research official policy and appeal against planning decisions. Log on to www.planningportal.gov.uk



Saniplus is ideal for an ensuite extension as it can take waste from a bath, shower cubicle, toilet and wash basin

What factors need to be taken into consideration in terms of where the bathroom can go?

Helen Brunskill says: 'Think about how the room will be reached – will a new hallway or landing be required? Or can access be provided by branching off from the original hall, or dividing off part of an existing room?'

'Architects often stack bathrooms on top of one another, or near each other, to make cost-effective use of drainage. But where a conventional waste connection to your system is not possible, then a macerator pumping device, such as those from Saniflo (www.saniflo.co.uk), can be installed. This enables a bathroom to be located anywhere in a house where large-bore pipework may have been impractical. The device pumps waste to the soil stack, even if the stack is on the opposite side of the house.'

'Macerators cost between £200 and £400, depending on the make and

model. These systems used to have a reputation for being fairly noisy, but technology has moved on in recent years and flushing a toilet will only operate the motor for a few seconds in any case.'



Saniwall is a built-in frame system designed to accommodate all types of wall-hung WCs. It has a dual flush and an integral macerator pump, so it is ideal for use where gravity-fed plumbing would be difficult or impossible to install

What is the best way to go about designing my layout?

Philip Porter says: 'Start by using a pencil and graph paper to draw the floor plan of your bathroom to scale, including the position of all waste outlets, plumbing and fixed items such as the door(s), windows and radiators.'

'Work on a scale of 1:15. This means that each 10mm on the paper is equal to 15cm on the floor. Then, on a separate piece of graph paper and using the same scale, draw the items that you want to have in your bathroom; cut them out and position them accordingly. Consider the space that will be required round each item, such as an area for drying off beside the bath or shower and space for standing in front of the sink.'

'Specialist bathroom companies often provide a free design service and may produce 3-D walk-through

computer graphics. They would like you to buy their products in return, obviously, but you are not obliged to do so.'

'Alternatively, you could create your own 3-D model using online tools – try <http://mydeco.com/rooms/planner> – or invest in a comprehensive kit from a company such as Modelrooms.'

'If an architect is involved with the project, they will be able to assist with the design. The internal layout should be finalised before building work starts, to ensure drainage and other pipework is correctly positioned.'



Modelrooms (www.modelrooms.com) offers kits from as little as £25 that are great for anyone planning to renovate their home or undertake a build. The kits include magnetic pieces to help visualise your design, plus inspiration cards



Greenwood Airvac Affresco Quatro D100LTG extractor fan, with timer and light, £50.97, Plumbworld



Manrose Axial 20W fan, with white square grille, BEAB approved, £9.68, Screwfix



Greenwood Airvac Affresco Wave D100TC extractor fan, with timer, £48.92, Wickes

Can I take on the electrical work myself and how should I position the lighting?

Bill Noble says: 'If you're employing a building contractor or a specialist bathroom firm, then they will organise sub-contractors, including a qualified electrician. If you are undertaking the project yourself, choose a tradesperson registered with a competent persons scheme (www.partp.co.uk) to ensure their work meets Building Regulations and can be signed off.'

'The electrics need to be planned and completed at an early stage, prior to fitting the sanitaryware, so all wiring can be concealed. Due to the regulations, you should avoid freestanding, hanging or adjustable light fittings. Recessed lights and sealed units are the safest options. No switch, apart from ceiling pull-cords, may be installed within reach of anyone using

a bath or shower, and no plug-socket fittings – apart from razor sockets – are allowed in bathrooms. You will need isolating switches for other electrical appliances such as an electric-shower heater or booster pump.'

'Check how far away from a water source any lighting can be fitted. Each zone in a bathroom requires a specific IP (ingress protection) rating to indicate its degree of protection against water – from submersion to just splashing.'

'Most bathrooms are prone to condensation. An extractor fan fitted to a window or outside wall will reduce this. Natural ventilation is great if there is space for a window, and opening rooflights can be a useful option as they save wall space and provide a lot of natural light.'

What should I take into account when choosing fittings and finishes?

Carole Box says: 'Use special bathroom paint, as this will be able to cope with the moisture content of the air where standard paints can go mouldy or peel. If you want specific colours, try using a paint-mixing service – but ask for a paint that is suitable for humid areas.'

'Before buying a bathroom suite, try sitting in the bath for comfort and check that you can get all the fittings up your stairs. Don't forget to allow enough space to move around in the new room's layout. Wall-mounted basins and WCs create uninterrupted floor space, but check the plumber can install these. If your walls aren't strong enough to support a wall-hung system, you might need a special bracing that will house a concealed cistern. Having to incorporate this part-way through a build causes delays and add to the costs.'

'If you decide to install compact sanitaryware, the taps will also need to be of similar proportions to avoid a disjointed look. Shower-baths that are narrower at one end are ideal for small rooms; or if you don't want a bath, walk-in shower enclosures can be bought as left- or right-handed options for added flexibility.'

'Always allow several weeks if you are ordering non-standard items, though – especially if the stockist needs to import them.'

If your bathroom is too small for a separate shower and bath, try a design like this Milano 1500 shower-bath with a curved screen, £334, Tesco Direct



The Coral bathroom suite, from Wickes, is a cost-effective choice to keep your extension within budget. It includes basin, pedestal, cistern and WC all for £122.34, and is available in-store to take away

How can I ensure my new bathroom is waterproof and soundproof?

Lee Richards says: 'The key to a fully waterproof bathroom is to use a high-quality product on a strong and sturdy background. I would recommend using tile-backer board, which is available from most large DIY stores and will remain completely stable when exposed to damp or wet conditions. Once it is applied to the wall, you can simply tile straight onto it.'

'It is important to have a good seal round a bathtub or shower tray. Spend a little more on a long-lasting sealant, e.g. from UniBond, and you will only need to re-seal your bathroom every one or two years. If you use cheaper-brand sealants then, from my

experience, I have found that the seal can turn mouldy very quickly.'

'To ensure your bathroom is soundproof, I would encourage homeowners to purchase specialist soundproof plasterboard, for example Gyproc, which is available from all major builders merchants. To apply it, adopt the same method you would when applying a normal plasterboard sheet.'

'Specifically with new bathrooms, I would also recommend insulating the wall with a sound-deadening product, e.g. Rockwall. Sandwich this in between the layer of plasterboard and the wall, and this will provide a good resistance to sound.'

Can I install the suite myself?

Philip Porter says: 'If you have some DIY skills, you could fit the bathroom sanitaryware. Employ professionals, though, for gas and/or electrical installations, such as extending your central heating system.'

'Decorative finishes can make or break the look of a room, so it may be a false economy to do everything yourself. Most specialist bathroom companies will offer a complete design and fit service, organising the various trades and tackling as much or as little of the project as you want for a fixed price.'

'Alternatively, you could do the preparation and decorating yourself, and employ individual tradespeople to do the rest. Expect to pay between £100 and £200 per day for plumbers and electricians, and ask for a written quote up front. Order all products and materials well in advance of your start date and check them for damage on delivery to avoid delays.'

How much could an extra bathroom add to my house's value?

Martin Swatton says: 'The addition of a new bathroom will usually increase the value of the property by at least the cost of the work involved. As with installing a kitchen, however, the cost of a bathroom can vary considerably. Bathroom suites may be purchased for as little as £200, but you could splash out and end up spending thousands. If you want to save money, then employ a plumber to install the suite and tackle the decorating yourself.'

'As a general guide, expect to spend £3,000 or more on the suite, tiles, paint, flooring and labour. Take time to shop around and look online for the best buys. Factor in a contingency sum, too, for unforeseen expenses.'

'List everything before you start and set a strict budget, including labour. Once the essentials are out of the way, then any leftover money can be spent on adding a few luxuries.'