

Brighton & Hove

**Information
Sheet No. 3**

LOFT CONVERSIONS: MEANS OF ESCAPE IN CASE OF FIRE

If you propose to convert the roof space of your two storey house to add a third storey then the means of escape in case of fire regulations will apply. If your property is a bungalow and you plan to convert the roof space then the requirements will be less troublesome, in both cases a Building Regulation application will be required (see Information Sheet No. 2).

When considering the means of escape provisions for a two storey house with a converted loft space there are many possible ways in which to achieve compliance with the regulations. This information sheet deals with the two main methods, where the new floor is more than 4.5m above ground level.

ROOF CONVERSION WITH NOT MORE THAN TWO HABITABLE ROOMS

METHOD 1

The house may either be provided with a protected stairway or the top floor can be separated from the rest of the house and given an alternative escape route.

The protected stairway should be enclosed with fire resisting walls separating it from the rest of the house and any door openings should be provided with self-closing FD20 doors (except those doors leading to bathrooms). The staircase should lead to a final exit or if the staircase leads to a protected internal hallway at ground floor level, two independent exits should be provided.

The separation of the top floor should be in accordance with the regulations, in the situation of a dwelling with a converted roof space the new floor should be provided with 30 minutes fire resistance.

METHOD 2

Where the new floor has no more than two habitable rooms the following guidance could be followed, however this information is generalised and further consultation should be made with Building Control.



The information contained in this leaflet is for guidance only, and clarification should be sought from Building Control regarding any Building Regulation matters. You are also advised to contact Development Control as planning permission may be required for your proposed building work.



The following provisions will only be applicable where the new work does not involve the raising of the roofline above the existing ridge level, or where the new storey is not more than 50m² in floor area.

Enclosure of the existing stair – the stair in the ground and first storeys should be enclosed with walls and/or partitions which are fire resisting and the enclosure should extend to a final exit.

Doorways – every doorway within the enclosure to the existing stair should be fitted with a self-closing device where the door leads to a habitable room. Any new doors should be fire doors, FD20 type with a self-closing device.

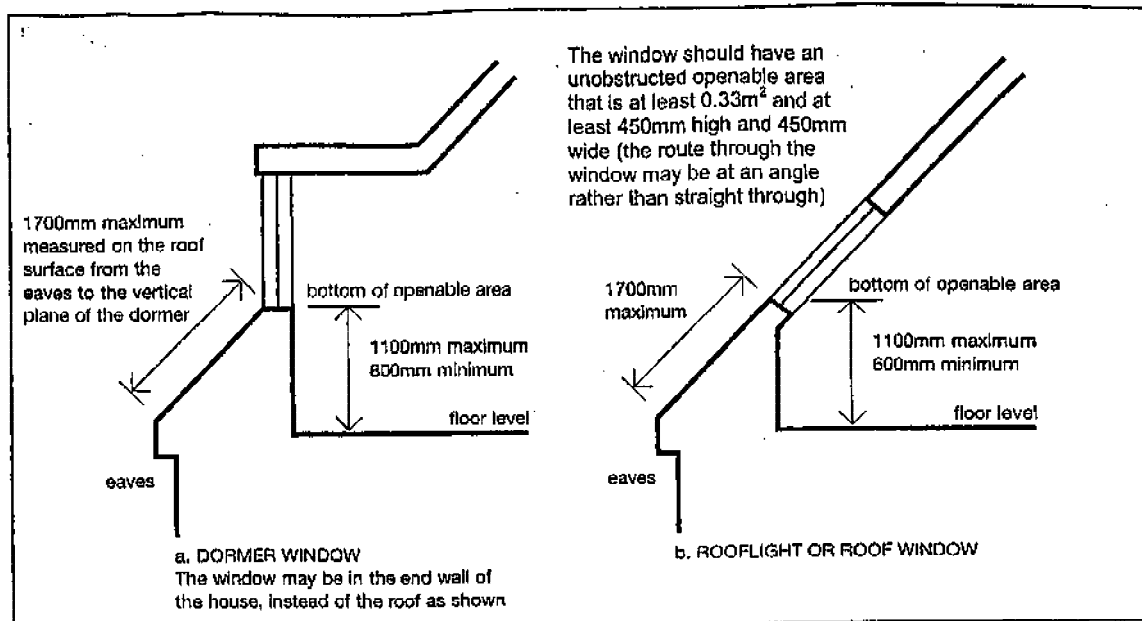
Glazing – any glazing within the enclosure to the existing stair should be fire resisting.

New Stair – the new stair leading to the new storey should meet the requirements of Part K – stair ramps, and guardings. The new stair may be either a continuation of the existing stairway, or in an enclosure that is separated from the existing stairway and from the ground and first floor accommodation, but which opens into the existing stairway at first floor level.

Fire separation of new storey – the new storey should be separated from the rest of the house by fire resisting construction. To maintain this separation measures should be taken to prevent smoke and fire in the stairway from entering the new storey.

Escape windows – each room in the new storey should be provided with an openable window (minimum size 0.33m², and at least 450mm high and 450mm wide) for escape or rescue purposes, see diagram below for details of acceptable window positions.

In a two room loft conversion a single escape window can be accepted provided that both rooms have their own access to the stairs and a communicating door should be provided between the two rooms so that it is possible to gain access to the escape window without passing through the stair enclosure.



Position of dormer window or rooflight as an escape window for means of escape.

N.B. Where the sill height of the window falls below the 600mm minimum required, guarding may be required to the opening, in which case contact Building Control for further advice.

DEFINITIONS

Final exit – this is the termination of an escape route from a building giving direct access to a street or passageway or walkway, and sited to ensure the rapid dispersal of persons from the vicinity of a building so that they are no longer in danger from fire and/or smoke.

Fire door – this is a door which together with its frame and furniture is intended (when closed) to resist the passage of fire and/or gaseous products of combustion.

Fire resisting (fire resistance) – this is the ability of a component or construction of a building to withstand fire and contain smoke for a required period of time. Periods of fire resistance vary according to the size and type of building, for further information contact the Building Control section.

Habitable room – this is a room used, or intended to be used for dwelling purposes (including for the purposes of Part B, a kitchen but not a bathroom).

Protected stairway – this is a stair discharging to a final exit to a place of safety (including any exit passageway between the foot of the stair and the final exit) this is adequately enclosed with fire resisting construction.