



**AKW**<sup>®</sup>  
Life Made Better

**WALL PANELS: A STYLISH,  
DURABLE, ACCESSIBLE SOLUTION**



Marlbrook Quartz

## SPECIFYING ACCESSIBLE BATHROOMS

When it comes to specification, style, durability and cost-effectiveness are possible to achieve with the right choice of materials – no matter the age of the housing stock or the individual's accessibility needs.

The installation of an accessible bathroom can help to breathe new life into a person's ability to live independently, and the importance of creating a bathroom that's fit-for-purpose cannot be underestimated.

Whether the bathroom in question must cater to the needs of a multi-generational household, meet present and future disability requirements, or promote accessibility on a tight budget, we're able to offer a solution.

In this guide we'll look at what specifiers, installers and occupants are looking for in a bathroom installation, we'll also highlight the potential problem areas, and show you how these can be overcome to deliver a cost-effective, durable and stylish accessible bathroom solution that lasts.

Scan to download the AKW Wall Panel Collection brochure



Scan to browse the AKW Wall Panel collection



## SPECIFYING ACCESSIBLE BATHROOMS

### WHAT DOES EVERYBODY WANT?

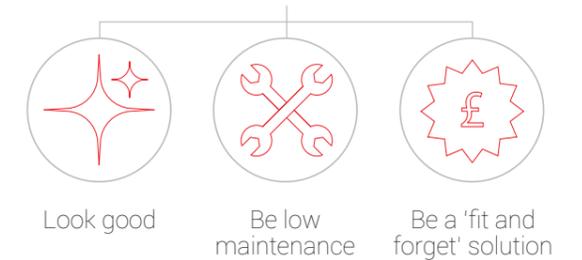
What exactly is at the top of everybody's wish lists when it comes to specifying accessible bathrooms?

Well, according to AKW research of social landlords, contractors and the people living with these bathrooms once they're completed, these are the most important factors for each group.

The people using the bathroom want it to:



The social landlords providing the bathroom want it to:



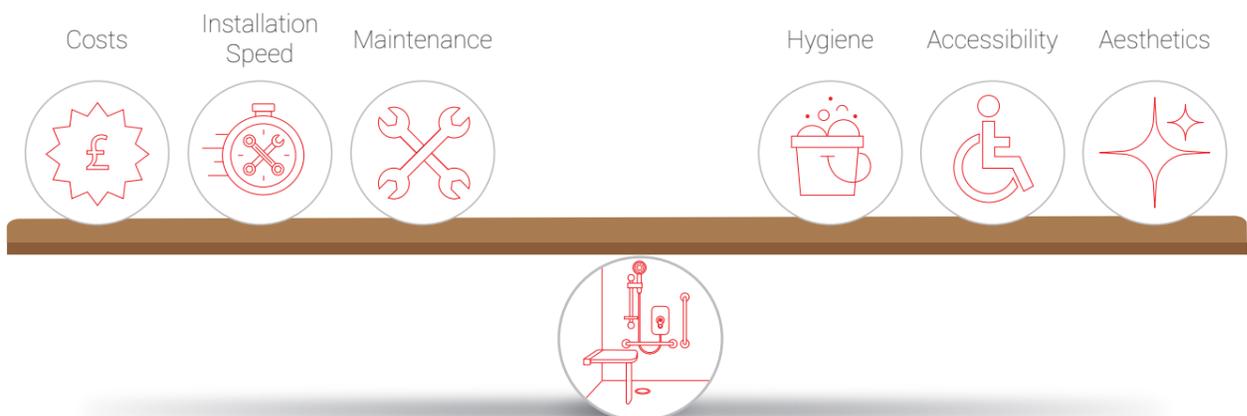
The contractors installing the bathroom want:



### HOW DO YOU KEEP EVERYBODY HAPPY?

So, how do we balance all these different needs and ensure that an accessible bathroom is not only fit-for-purpose, but looks good, is simple and cost-effective to fit and maintain, and lasts for many years to come?

We believe the way to do this is to identify the potential problem areas at the beginning and specify the right type of products that help to resolve these issues before they arise.



# POTENTIAL PROBLEM AREAS

## MOISTURE & HUMIDITY

The build-up of moisture and humidity create specific challenges in bathrooms and can lead to serious health problems and maintenance issues in poorly ventilated spaces.

With damp and mould being one of the key housing stock issues facing social landlords<sup>1</sup>, it's no wonder that any part of the home that attracts mould is a headache for public and private sector specifiers alike.

Grouted tiles are often a magnet for mould and can be difficult to scrub clean which makes them harder to maintain in the long run.



## DURABILITY

Peeling paint, wallpaper and damaged wall and floor tiles can present a safety hazard, especially in accessible bathrooms designed for use by vulnerable people.

If installed and maintained correctly, ceramic bathroom tiles can last for many years, however, they are prone to chips and cracks which are an ideal environment for bacteria and germs to thrive.

Damage to tiles can also cause water to seep into the cracks, loosening the bathroom's structural integrity, which can lead to an increased risk of injury. They're also time and resource intensive to remove and replace once damaged.



## DRAINAGE

Low and level-access shower areas can experience drainage issues if they haven't been installed properly, or the drainage fall of the wet floor slope isn't correct.

Poor drainage can lead to flooding, longer term maintenance issues, and increases the risk of slips and falls. Sitting or stagnant water can also be a breeding ground for mould and mildew which can cause health problems.



# ERADICATING PROBLEMS AT SPECIFICATION

When it comes to accessible bathrooms, many common issues can be significantly reduced by specifying the right products at the start, or at the refurbishment stage.

## MOISTURE & HUMIDITY

Overcoming moisture and humidity problems begins with specifying or retro-fitting an extractor fan that is appropriate to the room's size (typically 1 CFM per square foot) and ensuring that the ductwork is vented directly outside to avoid moisture build-up elsewhere in the home.

To remove the problem of mould build-up in grouting, it makes sense to replace tiles with wall panels. As well as being quick to install and long lasting, there are no grout lines where bacteria could thrive and they are easy to keep clean.

AKW EnviroVent Extractor Fans have been designed to exceed the needs of social housing. They are versatile, discreet solutions for efficient air ventilation for installation in a range of high-humidity areas around the home, including wet rooms, bathrooms and kitchens.

## DURABILITY

Tiles are a labour-intensive area of any bathroom installation or refurbishment, requiring a skilled fitter and continued maintenance to replace damaged tiles over the longer term. That is one of the reasons that more and more specifiers are opting for wall panels, as they provide a cost-effective solution that offers additional benefits such as: quick installation speeds, durability, an easy to clean surface and up to 35-year warranties.

AKW offers an extensive range of high-quality wall panel options across three ranges of high-pressure laminate and PVC wall panels. Easier to install and maintain than tiles, they can be installed over almost any existing surface and offer material cost savings on overall jobs when compared to tiling.

## DRAINAGE

Poor drainage in low and level-access showers isn't just a slip hazard, it can lead to leaks and structural damage if not dealt with. It is recommended therefore that the wet room floor gradient fall slopes correctly to prevent water pooling in unwanted areas. Also, that efficient shower wastes with sufficient flow capacity to handle the volume of water from a shower are specified, along with a shower waste pump if there is a low gradient floor, long pipe run, or if gravity-fed drainage systems are not possible.

AKW's collection of shower waste pumps are ideal for showers where conventional gravity waste systems might not suffice. These pumps are meticulously designed to ensure simple installation, quiet operation, and compatibility with various outlet pipe sizes.



# WALL PANELS - THE OBVIOUS CHOICE

## BUSTING WALL PANEL MYTHS

While wall panels have increased in popularity in recent years, especially in accessible bathroom refurbishments, tiles have been the standard for a long time and people are by nature resistant to change, so let's bust the wall panel myths to explain why they're a game changer.

MYTHS	FACTS
They aren't waterproof	AKW wall panels are available in PVC or a WPS plywood substrate core bonded with a high-pressure laminate (HPL). Both give a completely waterproof surface, protecting the area from moisture damage when installed correctly.
They won't stand the test of time	AKW wall panels come with a warranty of up to 35 years and offer long-lasting water protection for bathroom adaptations and refurbishments.
They need specialist tools to install	AKW wall panels can be installed using the same type of tools used to cut standard wood-based materials and would be found in any installer's toolbox.
They aren't versatile enough	AKW offers wall panels in a wide range of panel widths, heights, colours and finishes, with a variety of profiles also available.
They look cheap	AKW wall panels come in a selection of classic and contemporary finishes, ensuring they suit the look and feel of the bathroom's interior décor. From white or black marble to quartz, there is a style to suit any aesthetic.
They are difficult to install	AKW wall panels can be placed over tiles, walls or onto any clean, dry surface using a high-strength silicone-based adhesive. The interlocking tongue and groove panels and profiles are also quick and easy to cut to size.

## A FIT & FORGET SOLUTION

When it comes to promoting hygiene, reducing maintenance headaches and creating stylish interiors on a budget, wall panels are the obvious choice for specifiers, occupants and installers alike because they're quick and easy to fit, and in the nicest way... forget!

- ✓ Quick and easy to install with the items in your toolbox; no specialist skills or equipment needed to install them.
- ✓ Panels can be purchased separately; and the AKW Marlbrook wall panel range even has 300, 600, 900 and 1200mm width panels, making them easy to transport and manoeuvre.
- ✓ The wall panels need no grouting.
- ✓ The AKW Marlbrook and Origins ranges are constructed from structural-grade materials, enabling fixtures such as shower seats and grab rails to be fitted safely and securely without any impact on weight loading.
- ✓ The AKW Alvéo range includes an Accessory Fixing Kit which enables showers, shower seats, grab rails, and other weight-bearing accessories to be fitted safely and securely to the wall without damaging the panel finish.
- ✓ Multiple profiles are available, allowing every installation challenge to be resolved quickly and easily.



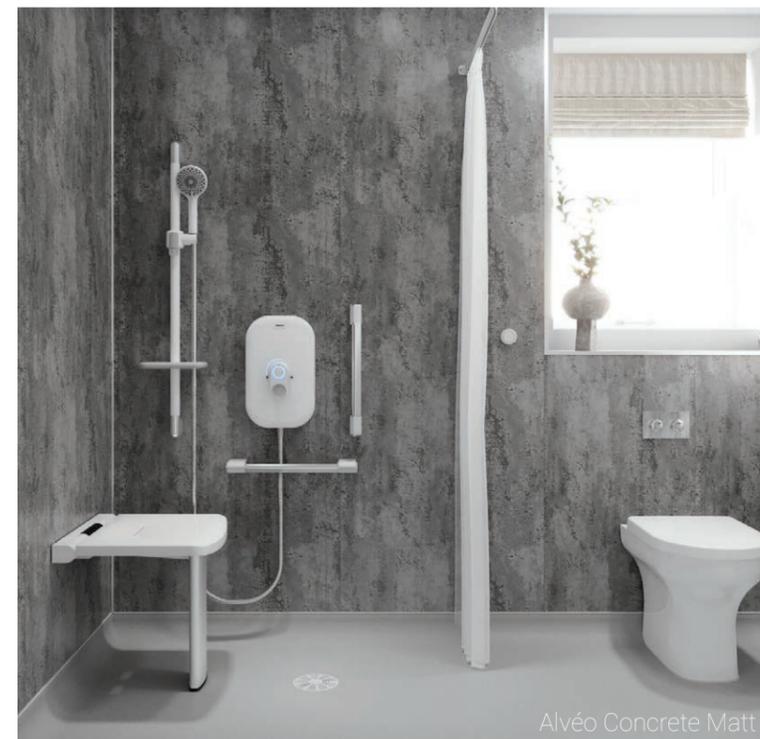


Marlbrook Matt Grey

The colourway and finish of a wall panel can communicate warmth, sophistication or classical style. Here are some of the latest bathroom colourway and finish trends:

## SURFACE DRENCHING<sup>2</sup>

Surface drenching, particularly in marble, is a big trend at present. The idea is that the same effect, or colour, is used across the walls and floors. If the accessible bathroom is being designed for someone with visual impairments or dementia, then colour contrast will be important, however, for those looking for a uniform finish throughout, AKW Safety Flooring in Cement could be combined with AKW Marlbrook Matt Grey or AKW Alvéo in Concrete Matt, for example.



Alvéo Concrete Matt



Marlbrook Black Marble



Origins Oyster Marble



Origins Grey Bonito



Marlbrook Quartz



Origins Biege Eiger

## PLASTER SHOWER WALLS<sup>3</sup>

The trend for fewer tiles and a more plastered look is becoming firmly established and is driven by a European shower room aesthetic. For those looking to replicate this, AKW Marlbrook Quartz or Origins Beige Eiger panels would be interesting options to consider.

## EARTH TONES<sup>4</sup>

Natural element earth tones continue to prove popular as people look to create a warming, welcoming environment in their bathroom spaces. Reflecting the colourways of clay, soil and sand are what this trend is about. AKW Marlbrook Quartz and Origins White Bonito fit the bill for those looking to include earth tones in their schemes.



Origins White Bonito

## ALVÉO PVC WALL PANELS

A range of highly durable, lightweight PVC panels available in four contemporary designs with matt and gloss finishes, and backed with a 15-year warranty.

Quick and easy to cut to size, panels feature an interlocking tongue and groove edge that ensures a discreet join on flat walls, with profiles available to support any configuration.

Suitable for use in adaptations when panels are installed onto structural walls, with the Accessory Fixing Kit used to prevent indentations in the panels.

## MARLBROOK WALL PANELS

The perfect alternative to tiles with a water and scratch-resistant finish on both sides of the panel and six stylish colour options to choose from.

Marlbrook is the ultimate adaptation panel, designed for durability with a WPS plywood substrate core that supports fixtures without impacting on weight loading, and a 35-year warranty.

These square-edged, high-pressure laminated (HPL), structural wall panels are available in multiple widths and can be used to create boxing around pipework.

## ORIGINS WALL PANELS

Available in 15 contemporary designs with a 35-year warranty, Origins panels are offered with a square edge or interlocking tongue and groove system to provide a seamless finish on flat walls.

The printed paper design is impregnated with phenolic and melamine resins which are dried and compressed to form a hard-wearing, high-pressure laminate (HPL) coating on cores made from WPS plywood substrate or exterior-grade medium density fibreboard (MDF).

<sup>2</sup> [www.granddesignsmagazine.com/bathroom/bathroom-trends-for-2024](https://www.granddesignsmagazine.com/bathroom/bathroom-trends-for-2024)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/home/decorating-ideas/g46108269/bathroom-design-trends-2024/>

<sup>4</sup> [www.roperrhodes.co.uk](http://www.roperrhodes.co.uk) 18 Beautiful Bathroom Trends and Inspirations for 2024



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