

Reorganise your home

Take a look at the space you have and think about how it could work better for you

Have you ever thought that you're not using your rooms to their full potential? Wasted space, unused corners and unconverted lofts and basements could provide extra space for less money than it would cost to upsize to a new home, while being flexible with what you already have means your home will work harder for you – think games rooms on top of garages or making the most of a loft or basement.

the most economical way to create a large basement, but almost any area of your house with a suspended floor can be dug out – and you can include space under your garden or patio/deck which may be accessed via a hatch. Planning permission is unlikely to be required, unless you are altering the appearance of the property, but building regulations will apply and it's important to obtain advice from a builder or specialist company. Visit planningportal.gov.uk for further information on basements.

CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

Adding new space, such as an extension or loft conversion, will usually increase the value of a property, but remodelling and improving existing space is also a money-spinner, particularly in the living areas and kitchen. Hallways and corridors can be combined with living rooms, the wall between a kitchen and a dining room can be knocked through to create a large informal space and a boxroom can be enlarged by stealing space from a landing area or another large bedroom. Be sure to add acoustic insulation to new stud walls and consult a structural engineer or building surveyor if they are to be removed. If you want to renovate, remodel or extend your home, plan ahead to make the most of any storage opportunities, taking into consideration under-used areas, such as beneath stairs, under windows and in alcoves.

GO UNDERGROUND A partial cellar can provide useful additional storage space, enabling anything from boilers to wine to be kept out of sight. Deepening an existing cellar is usually

CONVERT THE LOFT Attics and lofts offer fantastic potential to add an extra bedroom or increase your living space without using up your garden. You can usually convert your loft into additional living accommodation, adding insulation, flooring and so on, without planning permission as it comes under permitted development, subject to certain conditions – see planningportal.gov.uk for full details. However, as with a basement conversion, the work will need to comply with building regulations.

HAVE A PLAN Map out each room using graph paper or online tool Google SketchUp (sketchup.google.com), which allows you to create your own 3D models of how the room will look. Ensure you take into account doorways, windows and other structural details. Architects and designers can then help you create a workable design. Contact the Royal Institute of British Architects (020 7580 5533; architecture.com) for RIBA-chartered practices or the British Institute of Interior Design (020 7349 0800; biid.org.uk).



'Clever use of existing space can completely transform the way you live in your home – an architect's advice could be invaluable'

BERNIE HERLIHY, DEPUTY EDITOR



Dig down

For this kitchen project, London Basement (londonbasement.co.uk) created the structural waterproofed shell in the house's basement, then the homeowner, architect Stuart Forbes (stuartforbes.com), carried out the finishes himself. The basement was designed to provide a light spacious feel to the kitchen area, with a terraced open lightwell to the front and French doors opening out into the garden. The glass wall on the floor above and the glass balustraded staircase leading down to the basement also allow plenty of light to flood into the area. The cost of a structural waterproofed basement starts at around £200 per sq ft, while finishing the space to a standard ready for decorating and fitting out costs from £100 per sq ft London Basement (londonbasement.co.uk)

Build up

Ursula and Alastair Smyth brought a New England feel to their Thirties house in West Sussex. For £155,000, they extended by building a bedroom suite, complete with dormer windows, above the garage, and clad the house with fibre cement weatherboarding. Alastair drew up the plans with a designer, and the family lived in the house while the work was carried out. Weatherboards, from £40 per sq m, Marley Eternit. Garage doors, from £1,500, The Garage Door Co. Shutters, from £350 per sq m, Just Wood. PVC windows, from £150 each, Outside Interests



Convert a loft

Liz Kingston's beamed loft space has been converted into a new bedroom on the second floor of this listed house in Somerset. She employed architects Mitchell Taylor Workshop to redesign the layout of the existing building, which included creating the new top-floor bedroom. Two small

windows were added in one wall, heating was installed and the floor was strengthened. Reorganising the layout, which cost £300,000 in total, has created additional space without detracting from original building's character Mitchell Taylor Workshop (mitchelltaylorworkshop.co.uk)



The house was extended and given a new look with cedar cladding



The Seventies house was too small for its owners

'We rejigged to suit our lifestyle'



When Sam and Simon Luke bought their detached Seventies house in the West

Midlands, they knew they would need to make some drastic changes to it. 'The single-storey rear extension had a leaking roof and we desperately needed more space,' explains Sam. 'We really wanted somewhere inviting to come home to after work.'

Local company Khoury Architects (khouryarchitects.co.uk) initially suggested the couple go for a contemporary design with a flat roof, but the house stands on the edge of a conservation area and the local authority felt that this scheme was too radical. So, working with the existing pitch-roofed building, the firm designed rear and side extensions to create a five-bedroom family house for the couple and their two children that is now worth £1 million.

The internal layout has been completely transformed. 'The old garage was knocked down and foundations were put in to support the walls that were being built and the weight of

a new upper storey,' says Simon. 'The builders also took out the floor to the rear of the house to create a stunning double-height dining atrium opening onto the landscaped garden.'

There is now also a double-height open-plan kitchen/living area, which is overlooked by a first-floor landing. Previously, the hallway was dark and dreary, but now light floods into this space from the glazed rear extension. Projecting from the wall is a contemporary open-tread staircase built from the same cedar as the house's external joinery and cladding.

The whole design and build cost £360,000, and took eight months to complete. 'Now we have a living space which works really well for us as a family and makes a far better use of the space,' says Simon.



The new modern design works well for the Luke family