

Value added tips

From kitchen makeovers to greenimprovements, seven ways to boost your property's value. By Jayne Dowle



A London project Architects, with double-height windows that have 'thermally broken' frames to improve insulation
CHARLES HOSEA

Garden offices, garage conversions and kitchen renovations are, in order, the top three ways to deliver return on investment if you're thinking of home improvements this year.

"On average a garden office will cost you almost £9,000 to complete, but it will add 8.4 per cent to the value of your home," says Adam Kamani, the chief executive and co-founder of MoveStreets, a property portal that conducted the research. "That's £23,076 in the current market, meaning an overall value boost of £14,089 once the cost of the work is accounted for."

However, don't take up all

your outdoor space, warns Tim Bannister, a property expert at Rightmove. He says that the site has recorded a 70 per cent uplift in buyer searches for "gardens" in January. "It's looking likely to be the first restriction-free spring we've had since 2019, which means many will be looking forward to hosting friends and family during the Easter or bank holidays." In other words, plan smart, think smart and live smart.

There are limits on how far a home can be improved and extended under permitted development, so carefully weigh up your space and the size of the garden and outdoor areas before making irreversible

decisions on conversions and extensions.

Garden office

A basic timber structure suitable for use as a garden office can cost from about £4,250, according to Checkatrade, a tradesperson comparison website that, in conjunction with the Guild of Property Professionals (GPP), recently undertook its own research into adding value to homes.

If you already have an outbuilding you'd like to convert to an office or studio space, the costs are much less; a shed conversion, including improving insulation and decoration, is estimated to set you back as little as £1,650.

If you are starting from scratch it's important to consider legalities and structural issues, planning permission, damp-proofing, foundations and insurance. Another consideration is the possible capital gains tax that may arise on disposal should you run a business from your garden office, warns Iain McKenzie, chief executive of the GPP.

Garage conversion

Converting the garage into a home office, playroom or studio space or even just to add extra storage is also a smart addition, costing on average £14,500 but adding £27,471, leaving £12,971 — or 10 per cent — in added value, Kamani says.

"A garage continues to be one of the most popular [Rightmove] keyword search terms, though the role of the garage may have



changed over time and due to the pandemic,” Bannister says. “Where once it was just a place to park a car or store belongings, now people are seeing it as additional space they could perhaps use for either work or a hobby.”

However, as most garage conversions can be done under the permitted development rules, meaning you don’t have to apply for planning permission (you will need a Lawful Development Certificate under permitted development and to meet building regulations), you should always consider the improvement as part of a “whole building” strategy.

The cost of an extension depends largely on size, obviously. For instance, a single-storey extension can cost as little as £25,000, Checkatrade says, with a loft conversion roughly netting out at £37,500.

“Glass extensions are becoming increasingly popular and can add up to 7 per cent to the value of your home,” says Mike Fairman, the chief executive of Checkatrade. The catch? The average glass extension will cost £3,000 a square metre, so it’s not a cheap fix.

Kitchen renovation

Updating the kitchen may add £15,109 (5.5 per cent) to the value of your home and, if you plan it on a tight budget, could cost about £8,528 on average to do, according to MoveStreets.

It could be a good priority, because a nice, shiny new kitchen will impress potential



A 7.5m x 4m garden room by the Swift Organisation with decking, cedar cladding, and a powder-coated metal finish costs from £55,000

buyers, who typically would rather not face the upheaval and disruption of replacing tired units and out-of-date appliances themselves. However, tread carefully.

Don’t choose anything outlandish — being tasteful counts — and pay particular attention to aspects such as clever layout, use of space and lighting. This can be tricky to pull off, but make sure a new kitchen “balances” with the rest of the house too.

And of course, if a full renovation isn’t within budget, revamping cupboard doors, worktops, taps and sinks can help. A professional respray of kitchen cabinet fronts can cost as little as £80 per cabinet, or replacing work surfaces £500 to £800, depending on the material, according to Checkatrade.

Upgraded or extra bathroom

A super-fancy spa bathroom can add significant value, with an estimated increase of about £5,000 to £10,000, according to VonHaus, an online home retailer. So the addition of must-have spa features such as an air-bubble freestanding tub, steam shower and Bluetooth speaker showerhead could help you clean up on a sale.

“Bathrooms with baths, rather than exclusively showers, add much more value as they are often essential for parents of young children,” McKenzie says.

Eke out space for a practical downstairs cloakroom and you could add up to £2,000 in value — the elements of privacy, ease and access are all good selling points, he adds. According to Checkatrade this will cost about £1,250 on average, accounting for materials and labour.



Driveway and external lighting

An impressive entrance makes an instant impression and ramps up that all-important kerb appeal. Checkatrade believes that decent outdoor lighting can add between £1,000 and £2,000 in value to a property. When you're budgeting bear in mind that the average cost to install a single low-voltage outdoor wall light is £165, according to Checkatrade.

If your home has a driveway, consider its condition. Would it benefit from an upgrade? Depending on the location and size of your home (and driveway), Checkatrade reckons that a decent driveway can add 5 to 10 per cent to the value of a property. The cheapest — but perhaps not the most stylish — solution is tarmac. Checkatrade says this should cost £50 to £85 a square metre.

Eco features

We'd all love our homes to be as energy-efficient as possible to help us to tackle rising fuel bills and feel that we're doing our bit for the planet.

Installing double glazing can increase a property's value by up to 10 per cent, according to Checkatrade, at an average cost (eight windows, two uPVC doors) of between £4,000 and £5,000. According to Checkatrade the average cost of installing an air source heat pump ranges from £3,000 to £18,000. Solar panel installations can add between 14 per cent and 38 per cent to property values depending on where in the UK you live. You'll



The bathroom of Burma House, an east London renovation by Paul Archer Design
ANDY STAGG

pay between £5,000 and £8,000 for a photovoltaic system and £4,000-£5,000 for a solar thermal system.

Good maintenance

It's a boring (and expensive) fact of life that keeping value in a home means a more or less continual investment in maintenance. While chimney pointing, fence repairs and drain maintenance may not make your heart sing, making sure everything is shipshape can add between 3 and 5 per cent to average value, according to Checkatrade.

The roof is the big-ticket number. Roof repairs can cost in the region of £375 for just one roof valley replacement, according to Checkatrade. However, as the GPP points out, this is important: it estimates that roof issues picked up by a

structural survey can reduce an asking price by £5,000 to £10,000.

While unlikely to be the clinching factor in a sale, small problems and defects can create an impression of a house being left to rot — leading to low offers and sad faces all round.

For appearance's sake, the property industry body Propertymark advises, tackle minor issues such as peeling paint, dirty walls (especially near door frames and light switches), dripping taps, squeaky floors, doors or stairs, mouldy sealant in kitchens or bathrooms, limescale build-up on kitchen and bathroom fittings, badly fitted laminate flooring and broken lightbulbs.

Serious issues such as damp should never be hidden: they will show on any survey and come back to haunt you. ■

